

ACCIDENTALS

HELEN MACKAY

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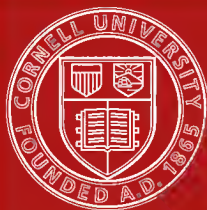
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THE COBWEB CLOAK

HALF LOAVES

HOUSES OF GLASS

STORIES FOR PICTURES

ACCIDENTALS

ACCIDENTALS

BY

HELEN MACKAY

AUTHOR OF

"HOUSES OF GLASS," "HALF LOAVES," "THE COBWEB CLOAK,"
ETC., ETC.



NEW YORK
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1915

E.V.

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A P O L O G I A

I HAD written these things in France during the past two or three years. They were already made^t into a book. Now they seem to me quite unfamiliar. They are things written ages and ages ago, in times almost forgotten, of a country that will never again be the same country, and of a people whose life will never again be the same life. Something has happened to the roads and streets and rivers; and to the people who pass along them; and to the forests and cities and fields; and to the people in thatched cabins, and to the people in castles. Nothing will ever any more be as it was. People who love France with a certain special love, know now why always she seemed to them sad, and so touchingly beautiful; and for what it was that, always, everything waited. There has shone out the high, clear, keen, pure flame that is the soul of France. Whatever happens, there is the flame shining. I am half ashamed of these stories because they are small and pale. And I am fond of them, because, though the things about which they were written do not matter, and the mood of their writing I do not even remember, still, they were written in the country of the beautiful flame.

H. M.

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Place Louis XV

IN the wet November twilight, across the Place that is the burial ground of kings and kingdoms, very many people from very many ways were going home.

It was a lonely thing to do, to stand by the gate of the Tuileries Gardens and watch the passing.

It was as if the great oval of so many comings and goings, of ages and of days, of kings and courtesans and travellers and labourers and vagabonds, of pageants and death, of all the world and the years, of each day's business and desire, were some great waiting-room of lost footsteps, a Salle des Pas Perdus, to which the footsteps came, from which the footsteps went, leaving no mark, and all lost, all of them, so quickly out of it.

It seemed as if the whole world were crossing the Place in that little black and white hour of

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going home, when all lonely people are more lonely than at other hours.

The cities of France sat and looked at one another across the Place in the chill white light. The black fountains tossed up their white water on either side of the white obelisk. The trees along the white parapet of the garden were bare and black. And the walls of trees along the Avenue of the Champs Elysées were black behind the white horses of Marly.

There had been some glow of sunset, but it was gone. The wide, long, straight road of the Champs Elysées led to the end of the world. The Arc de Triomphe, with infinite space of shadow beyond it, was a door at the edge of the world, open to the coming and going through of lost footsteps. One heard the echo of lost footsteps with all the hour's passing to and fro about the obelisk. And the obelisk, there in the midst of the footsteps, stood up tall and white and very lonely, to the glory of a buried land and of unknown gods and of a Pharaoh forgotten since hundreds and hundreds of years.

The ages were a background for the loneliness of the hour, and the world's events for its least comings and goings. In and out of the room of lost footsteps people came and went, and the loneliness of each one came with him and went with him.

The House of the Garden Window

So many people, so many infinitely different people, coming and going, so many infinitely different ways,—there was a certain comfort in the thought of being together with so many other people in loneliness.

The House of the Garden Window

THERE was a window under a blue mansard, to which church-bells rang across quiet streets and gardens.

To come to that window from the Place of the King in whose time the house had been built, for some great noble's pleasure, in the country, there was a bridge to cross, and a street to pass that used to be called the Path of the Cows, and another street, of the "*garenne, un terrain inculte, fertile en gibier,*" and the street once of the *Evêque de Babylone*. And then there was the street of the house of that window. There were treetops over the walls on either side the street, in places; and where the houses had their façades on the street, there were gardens beyond again. All the street in spring was fragrant of lilacs, and one there heard blackbirds and thrushes singing, and in winter the crows came out to the street from

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the gardens, in their priestly dress, to walk solemnly about on the big, old, green-stained cobbles.

There was a high, wide, heavy carved black door in a wall that was green velvet with moss, and one had to ring many times, always, before any one came to open the door.

The Window over the Garden

THE window was wide and tall; its white-curtained doors opened from a faded, worn, almost empty room, to the east, and to one of those many, old, broken-up gardens of Paris. The garden had once been part of the vineyard of a convent, and then, in the time of Louis the Bien Aimé, it had been part of the splendid great garden of a certain Cardinal and Minister; and now what was left of it, walled-in, closed, sealed, seemed to belong to nobody so much as to a stranger who waked every morning to look from the wide, tall window out to it.

Always at dawn the bells of many churches were ringing up and down the pathways, and the sounds of the city came across the garden, and in at the window with the lingering voices of the

The Window over the Garden

bells, and with the garden's own special sounds, and with all the good smells of it.

Something of old-time stateliness was left to the garden, in the "vista" of clipped yews ending blankly now in wall and ivy, and in the formal starting out of box-edged paths, four ways, from the square stone basin. In summer dawns it seemed as if one could hear light footfalls along the paths, delicate treading of those who went satin-shod away after the night's fête, when phantom lanterns and torches paled in the sunrise.

In winter there were the voices of sparrows and crows in the garden, and there were the smells of wet, cold earth, and of tree stems and fungus and moss and dead leaves.

In summer a nightingale lived and sang there, and in spring there were masses of lilacs, and in autumn the garden had a golden floor, but it was in winter that one who was sad loved it best.

The winter days were always rainy, but almost always their dawns were beautiful.

In tense winter dawns, the trees against the window stood outlined, very dark and velvet, etched in dry point, upon the great glow that covered all the east. The glow would have its touch on every stem and branch and twig, so that every branch and twig seemed to be translucent, as if cut from topaz. Across the high garden wall the

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roofs and chimneys of the houses in the street would be massed dark and purple as smoke against the glow. And the garden would be sunk deep in shadow.

There had once been statues at the four corners of the square, stone-rimmed basin in the middle of the garden. One of the statues was still there, a poor little foolish god of love. The bow and the arm that had held it were gone. The arm that had drawn the arrow was left in an empty gesture.

Waiting

THERE was a woman who often used to watch the dawns come over the garden. At the end of long nights she would stand at the window and wait. All the garden waited.

The Present, that had broken the garden and forsaken it, never had touch upon it. In those moments of waiting, the garden's long Past would seem to be gone from it.

The woman at the window loved the garden because it was forgotten, and the little god because he was broken. Sometimes, as she stood there and everything waited, she would find herself saying just the word "France," over and over.

Secret Garden

Secret Garden

THE trees of the garden were beautiful all winter—even more beautiful then, when one could see the outlines of them, the exquisite shapes of them, than they were in summer.

It seemed always as if Paris trees were a little different from other trees, and a little more lovely in their architecture.

All the trees of the garden were stained with moss and lichen. In spring-time, when the drift of young, fragile leaf was exquisite as lace-work across the tree stems and branches, one did not realise how beautiful the stems and branches were, stained with colours of rust and copper and green and orange and bronze and gold.

Spring and summer and autumn hid the garden from the window—the little frivolous, tragic god of love, and the jade green water of the basin, and the yellow, old houses over the wall in the street, the blue roofs and the chimney-pots, that had so curiously and intimately to do with the treetops and the drifting by of clouds.

In summer the garden was a lovely secret hidden thing; but in winter it was the locked enclosure of sad secrets, and of dreams there was small hope for.

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In winter one could see through the trees just enough distinctly and just enough vaguely for it to be possible to imagine anything about the garden, about people in velvet and ermine coming there, and nuns, before that, with white hands and white faces and white-winged cornettes. One could imagine the vineyard that the nuns helped to tend, and afterwards the bosquet where Madame gave rendezvous to Monsieur.

And then a curious special happiness belonged to the garden. In spring there were chestnut trees with deep pink torches, and there were deep pink flaming rhododendrons, massed against the walls. But in winter it was as if one could see very far through the bare trees, down the long perspective of the past. One knew then the special beauty of forsaken things. And it was the happiness of winter to be able to feel sadness so intensely.

The Empty Journal

AMONG a lot of valueless odds and ends that had been put away and forgotten since no one knew how long, ribbons and fans and slippers and laces, sad with the special sadness of little forgot-

The Empty Journal

ten frivolous futile things, Ursule one day came across a small book bound in parchment the colour of ancient ivories. The parchment binding folded over with a flap like an envelope, and was tied round the flap with a white leather string. The back of the book was sewn with rough cord in two long stitches. At the top of the front cover of the book was written in ink, very faded, in a man's writing, *Le dimanche 13 Septembre 1711*. And at the bottom of the back cover was written in a woman's delicate fragile writing, *13 Septembre 1755*.

Ursule untied the leather string and opened the book. It was full of rough thick pages, as yellow as the parchment, with edges unevenly cut and curled over, and eaten and stained by time. It smelled of darkness and dust and mould and years and things faintly, delicately sad. All the pages were blank, except the first page where a few words were written at the top, and the last page where a few words were written at the bottom.

At the top of the first page the man had written, in a fine, distinguished, old-time writing, that had lasted curiously strong and eager, kept curiously young through all the years, "*Sois toujours bonne, fidèle, modeste, douce et sage.*"

And the pages were all empty. And at the bottom of the last page the woman had written, after

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two score years, when she was old and her pretty hand was grown tremulous, "Et je fus légère."

The White Cat

THE black cat went with them all along the paths, up and down, of the cemetery above the race-track. He kept close to the forlorn skirt of the old woman as she led the way. He stepped delicately through the wet, yellow network of vines and grass and roots that had woven the paths and the graves all in together, and arched his back and held his tail up straight out of the tangle.

The paths were so overgrown that it seemed as if it must be difficult for the old woman who was the caretaker of the graveyard to trace their ways in the autumn twilight. The little ancient graveyard of the nuns of Longchamps seemed the most abandoned place in the world. There had been races that day on the great green oval, down under the graveyard wall and across the road. But that was all over in the twilight, and everything was very still.

It was the month of September. The leaves were quite fallen in the graveyard. There were the sadnesses of the fallen leaves and the dusk, of the end of summer and of the day.

The White Cat

The tall, thin, old woman led the way through the wildernesses of wet, autumn, alive things, and marble and iron things that were all falling into ruin. She told the two strangers odd, broken bits of stories as they went. She had been unwilling to let them in at the gate in the old, yellow, soft, stained wall. She had told them how no one was admitted any more to the cemetery, except members of the few families who still kept up graves there. She said the Government wanted the cemetery to be forgotten, because when there was no longer even one grave *entretenu* it would revert by old law to the city of Paris. That would be soon, she said, for no one ever came there any more.

Perhaps it was because she was lonely that she let the strangers in. Hers was a lonely little house at the gate of the place of still more lonely, little, marble houses. In at the door of her house one could see that there was a fire burning, and there was a blackbird in a cage by the door.

Almost all the tombs and crosses in the graveyard were broken. With the graves of the nuns there was one great mound that was the grave of many soldiers. They were soldiers who had fallen in *sorties* of the year when Paris was twice besieged. There was the grave of an actress, who had been young when she died, long ago.

Over the low wall at the bottom of the grave-

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yard one could see the race-track through the bare acacias and the bare lilac bushes,—the broad sweep of grass, the white railings, the tribune buildings with their empty, white tiers of seats. The graveyard was the more lonely a place because all that was so close to it.

The old woman's voice dragged like her slow step as she told of her dead to the strangers, of this one who lay here and that one who lay there.

But when she spoke to the black cat her voice was quite different. One knew by her voice that she loved it. And that she had not much else, of things or people, to love.

The black cat kept always close to her and rubbed against her skirts and purred to her. Often she stooped to pet it.

At the end she caught it up, and held it against her shoulder. "Oh, mon amour," she said to the black cat, in that voice so different from the voice she had for telling her stories, "mon tout petit, comme je t'aime!" She clutched the black cat close, and it rubbed its head against her chin, purring cosily. "Que tu es sage!" she said, "que tu es beau!" She was searching words for it. She wanted to say to it the most beautiful thing she knew. She said, "Mon amour, comme tu es blanc!"

A Man and His Wife and a Woman Who was Dead

A Man and His Wife and a Woman Who was Dead

WHEN he came out to where she sat with the books she had not been reading, in the garden, she, Thérèse, his wife—saw, surprised, how really unhappy and ill he looked. The woman who had been having tea with her had told her, “‘Dora la Blonde,’ don’t you know, is dead.” And she had wondered how Pierre would feel about it. She had thought, surely it must be something of a blow to him.

She herself had felt somewhat oddly about it, though she had only raised her eyebrows and shrugged her shoulders, when Clothilde de Meur had told her of the thing at tea.

“Yes?” she had said, as if she had no notion why Clothilde told her.

When Clothilde was gone she had come out into her garden—that always seemed to her to be her secret place, unknown of and walled in, as was all that she felt in her life—and had sat there for quite a long time, not reading.

The garden was deep sunk in spring, in blossoming of lilac and acacia, full of Easter lilies, and little fragrances of fresh cut grass and box edges

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that had just been watered and earth that had been warmed all day in the new sunshine, and full of the voices of birds, sparrow and thrush and blackbird,—and there was a nightingale,—and of the voices of bells, all the church bells of the quarter, in their especially much and especially sweet ringing for the month of Mary. It was indeed a most lonely little garden. The fine rooms of the old hôtel all gave on the courtyard that Pierre Lemuet had built two centuries and a half ago, and on the street that was a proud street in its proud quarter. Only the unused upper rooms, that would have been the nurseries if there had been children, and her own rooms on the ground floor, gave upon the garden, to which the sounds of the city came strangely, and from which it always seemed strange to look up through the trees to city roofs and chimneys.

She had sat there thinking how odd it seemed that a creature so utterly of life as Dora la Blonde, the famous, could be dead; and wondering what the death of a woman like that would mean to a man like Pierre. She had been wondering how men of the world felt about those things, and thinking that, after all, there had been so many years of it, it must mean something of grief, surely, to even so of-the-world-worldly a man as Pierre.

Then Pierre came out to her in her garden,

A Man and His Wife and a Woman Who was Dead

where, in all their ten years together, he never had troubled to come before.

She had thought, "At least it will be a shock to him." But she had had no idea it would be a grief to him such as that she saw now in his face. For an instant it angered her that he should bring his grief—or anything of his—into her garden.

It was so especially her garden. In it had so especially dwelt, through ten years, all of her that was most her own. His unhappiness—of all people's—had no right there. Why should he bring his unhappiness there, to this place of hers, the garden that had kept hers enclosed? When she, unhappy, would have wanted him, he had not come. When she had had loneliness she would have given the world to tell him of, he had not come. He had no right to come now.

Now it was different. All day it had been different. Because of one person, last night, at Clothilde's "White Ball," it was all become, suddenly, different. She had amused herself extremely well at the ball. She had felt herself, as she never had before, really to be one of the gay, charming people, who were Pierre's people. She had been glad that she was only twenty-eight and slim and quick, and that she was pretty. There was one, especially, among all the people, because of whom she was glad that she was pretty. It was that one who had

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made her feel that she could take things carelessly, as other women did. It was as if he had brought her out from the quiet and shadow of her garden into gay rooms. He had seemed to be taking her away from all that she knew. She had been glad of that all day. A ballroom was better than a closed garden.

And now Pierre came to her out in her garden.

He came over and sat down in the other chair, by her table of books.

He had always had a way of—just for an instance—coming toward one and sitting down by one, that gave the effect of his having always possessed all desirable things, of his knowing his right to them, and accepting them, as his right, indifferently. But now he came to her like one who was dull and had nowhere to go. It was as if, in all Paris, he, the man perhaps most in demand there, had nowhere to go, and no one to whom to turn—he, whom always every one had sought out. It was as if he, always sufficient to himself, could not be alone now in this thing, and came to her—of all the world. It was as if he were quite another person than Pierre, who was brilliant, and for whose pleasure the world was made.

“You care—like that?” she asked, without any pretence, pretences fallen somehow quite away from the terribly real thing it was.

A Man and His Wife and a Woman Who was Dead

He answered her only with a motion of his head, dully, not looking at her.

She said, "You have come from—there?"

He only moved his head again in that stupid sort of way.

"And you were with her last night, you were with her—then?"

Suddenly it seemed to her strange that a man's wife should be at a dance when the woman he loved was dying, if he cared like that.

For ten years—she had very soon come to know of it—"Dora la Blonde" had been the reason of her loneliness. If she could have stooped to it, she would have hated her. But she had not known that his love for her had been like this. Suddenly it seemed cruel that she had not known. It seemed cruel that she had danced while the woman, who meant to him what she saw now in his face, was dying.

"You were with her, then?" she asked of Pierre.

"Yes," he said.

She found herself saying in this strange thing, all those things people say when it is not strange.

"It was very sudden?"

"Yes," he said.

"You had had no idea?"

"No."

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"Nor had she?"

"No."

After a minute he said, "She suffered horribly, and she was horribly afraid."

His wife said, "Poor thing. Oh, the poor, poor thing."

Then he began to tell her about it, looking stupidly at her, his face all marred with pain, and speaking stupidly.

"She suffered so," he said, his eyes full of suffering, "and she was so afraid," and he shivered as if he were afraid too. "In the morning she had been well, I had seen her. In the afternoon they sent for me. But I had the message too late, and when I got there she was dying. She was conscious all night. She knew she was dying. And she was afraid. She was afraid of the dark. She died while it was still dark. It was so dark," he said, as if that were an important part of it. He stopped speaking and just sat there.

It seemed a long time. The garden was very still. She did not speak to him. Anything she could have said would have been unbearable.

For years they had scarcely spoken except before people and the servants, and never once in all their life together had they spoken intimately.

And now he told her of this, he who had never come to her before, came to her with this. The

A Man and His Wife and a Woman Who was Dead

men, the other women, his many friends, he had not gone with this to them, not to any of them. And he had not been able to bear it alone. He had come to her.

He had not come to her because he thought she would understand; she knew he had not thought at all about it. He had just come instinctively to her, as one is so strangely sure to go when one is unhappy to that very person whom most one has made unhappy.

She had not thought he knew she was unhappy. Perhaps he had not known, and did not, now; and yet it was because of that, that he came to her.

It was because he had left her lonely, that he came to her when he had something he could not bear in loneliness. It was as if she had just stayed still there, in her place, and waited for him to come to her when he should be unhappy, knowing where to find her and how he should find her.

He sat looking at her stupidly, and she sat silent there with him.

She would have liked to say to him, "Talk to me, tell me." But she could not. She would have liked to go to him and touch his shoulder and say "I am sorry." But she could not. She wanted to say to him, "Need me, need me now, however odd it seems, need me in this. And need me afterwards in everything."

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She had been proud to stay alone and need no one. She had been very proud, and she had despised her unhappiness. Because of her pride she had prisoned herself in with it. There had seemed to her to be no escape with pride from it. She had walled herself in with her unhappiness that no one might see it. She had been proud to stay alone and need no one. Then last night, because of a man in a ballroom, she had known that she could not stay alone any longer in a closed place. She knew that the man, who for the first time counted in it, would come to count for too much in it, as it always is with such things, and she did not care. It had come to her, suddenly, as a new pride, that she did not care. There was for her, a choosing between her garden and a ballroom, between loneliness and the sort of thing one takes, like that, to fill one's hours with.

But suddenly now she was afraid of choosing and all her pride fell away and left only need. She wanted to say to him, "I need so desperately that you should need me." She wanted to tell him, "It makes all the difference if you need me." She wanted to say to him, "Let me help you, and so help me." She wanted very much to go to him as if they had always understood one another, as if they had loved one another, or yet might. But she could not.

A Man and His Wife and a Woman Who was Dead

The swallows flew low across the garden, back and forth, back and forth. Dusk was gathering there. The bells of Sainte Clothilde, across streets and other gardens, broke into their sunset ringing, and then all the May church bells of the quarter followed them.

Pierre sat motionless, as she did. Not the Pierre she had always known, erect and careless of everything, and brilliant, and hard as are all brilliant things.

She wondered if, after a while, he would be that brilliant Pierre again, going away from her to worlds of his pleasure. She wondered if after a while again, he would be without need of her. And if that were so, she wondered, would she ever think of him as he was now, the Pierre who needed her,—and would thinking of him so make a difference to her in her life.

It might be for the moment only, and it might be for a very odd reason, but she knew that, then, and no matter why, and even if it were not to last, she was more to him than any one in all the world.

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A Fiacre

THE fiacre was turning the corner from the Place de la Concorde up the quais of the right bank. The man in the fiacre wore the white blouse of a mason, and he had no hat. He was big and young and blonde. There was a pink and blue handbox in the open hood of the fiacre. The girl had a smart little hat and smartly done dark hair. The man's hands lay on his knees. They were bare, and her hands, clutching his, as she sat swung round to him in the fiacre, were smartly gloved.

It was a May afternoon and sunshiny. The green Louvre-St. Cloud tram, that waited by the bridge, was filling up with cheery people. The guard's brass horn was sounding. There was a string of six big grey Normandy horses hauling a load of stone past the lady Marseilles. There were some red and orange election bills posted along the wall of the gardens, under the lion. The gardens were green over the terrace wall, and the sky and the roofs and all the shadows and the river were blue. There was much traffic along the quai.

The fiacre with the man and the girl in it was blocked for a moment behind the statue of Marseilles.

The man was sitting very straight, perfectly mo-

Late July

tionless, his hands on his knees, stiff and rigid. He was staring straight before him, with fixed, utterly expressionless eyes. It was as if he had put all life out of his eyes, and made them empty as glass eyes, and fastened his mouth in that line as hard as anything cut in stone.

The girl lifted her face to his and did not care who might see. She did not trouble to wipe away the tears that seamed and seared her face. Her face was cut and torn with tears, marked and stained. It was dreadful to see.

But his face was more dreadful yet, with no expression whatever of life in it.

And people passing and seeing it could never know what it meant at all.

Late July

IN late July, and the late, long, burning sunsets, the Paris streets were full of swallows.

The swallows flew low down into the streets, through the crimson lights and the gold lights and the purple shadows. They flew their sailing still-winged swooping flight low over the pavements, and their strange little cry had its part in all the sounds of the streets.

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The swallows came down from their homes, among old soft blue roofs and black-hooded chimneys, to sweep and cry through the sunset streets.

The poor people came out to the streets.

The city was theirs, now that the rich people were all gone away.

A poor, sad people now came out into the streets, where there were the swallows in the sunset.

One wondered, what would the streets be for one, if it were not that one had sadness. If, by some chance, one came, somehow, to be happy, might not one actually miss one's unhappiness, be lonely without it, there in the streets?

The Street of the Brown Room

THE Féréneys were away for quite two years after their marriage, and in that time Marise de Geslin knew only of Constant what she heard through others.

She had gone to the contract and the marriage.

Her husband had said to her, "You must be proud, and not let anyone see. You owe me that. All these years I have saved you in the eyes of

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the world. I suffered, and because I was proud I would let no one see. Had I not kept up appearances you would have gone down, under, like many another woman. I suffered, and would not let anyone see. Now it is you who suffer. You owe it to me not to let anyone see."

She had always thought him stupid, and had felt contempt for him. But now it was she who was stupid, and he who had contempt. She realised now that it is always the one who suffers who is stupid, and the other who has contempt.

She went to the contract and the marriage, and was very beautiful and very brilliant, and afterwards had no memory of the little bride, or of him, in all that.

The memory of him, Constant de Féréday, that never left her for a moment of those two years,—so terribly real that everything else of all her life was made unreal by it,—was of his coming to her that last time to tell her of his definitely arranged marriage. Fascinating as always, in his every tone and gesture and look, he came to tell her the thing that killed her, cool and reasonable about it, expecting her to "take it" as he "took it," saying she should have known that some day it would have to be. There must be, of course,—he told her, shrugging his shoulders as if in contempt of the necessity,—an heir to such a title, to such an estate,

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as his was; surely she'd known it all along, and now that the thing was arranged for—it was the little Margenteuil, Esmée, the one not yet out—she, Marise, must be, as he was, “good sport” about it.

She had the memory of his watching her closely as he told her—there where they had been so happy through five years, in a certain odd little brown room, one May evening. No man in Paris was so gentle as he, or so hard, so caressing and tender and intimate, and so hopelessly not to be approached. She had the memory of him with his dark eyes looking into hers, yet showing nothing to her. And of his holding her hands while he told her; and of how beautiful his hands were; and of how intensely she had felt the touch of them. And then she had the memory of him as he had been after her wild outbreak,—her sobbing things out, imploring him,—when he stood up and looked at her, and had no word for her.

She had given him all she had, for five years. She was not yet thirty, and she had nothing left. He had taken it all. She had thought that she was all he had cared to have, ever, in the world. She had thought that it was all for always, and beautiful so, and sacred so, and divine.

Now he showed her what it had been to him.

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And when she had showed him what it had been to her, he had stood up and looked at her, without a word for her, and turned and gone out of the brown room.

It always seemed strange to her that she went on seeming to be alive after that. It seemed strange that she should get up in the mornings, and that she should move and speak. It seemed strange that she should dress and eat. And it went on every day for two years. And every day that it could be so was just as strange a thing to her. She did not understand it at all.

It was her husband, somehow, who made that it should be so. Louis de Geslin, who had seemed so stupid in his love for her, who had never possessed of her more than her cool contempt, took complete possession of her life now, and ordered and arranged it, and kept her going on in it. It was like a stage manager keeping a dull actress up in her part, making her go through her lines and her business with decent appearance. With a curious strength he kept her up to her part, for the sake of the audience that was, indeed, all agape at them. She understood now how all the time the audience had been agape at them, and how, through all the years of it, he had not been weak but in his own way strong, keeping up appearances. He said now,

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rather as Constant had said, "Keep up appearances; whatever happens, in the eyes of the world, we must keep up appearances."

So she would get up in the morning and go out, and be beautiful and brilliant, and at night she would go to bed. She would even sleep. She did not cry out at all when once, driving with Louis, the carriage passed the house of the brown room. And when people spoke of the Féréneys, she came to feel about the pain that was hers, as one does who hears of some unknown person in some far place being horribly hurt.

After two years like that, one of the two older Margenteuil girls, Beatrice it was, told her that, very shortly, Constant and Esmée would be back in Paris. Beatrice de Margenteuil watched her curiously as she said it. Of course everyone knew. It was, as Louis had said, only his attitude in it all that had saved her,—if it was saving,—kept her with a right to stay on in the world where she could meet, constantly and amicably, the sisters of the girl who had married Constant.

"Esmée is a shy, plain little thing," said Esmée's sister, "poor darling,—and he is just the sort of man,—sometimes I fear——" She left it in the vague.

"They must be very happy together," said Marise, wording the thing that had been to her

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the worst of it all, all the time, "they must be very happy, to have kept away, alone together, for two whole years."

"Oh," said the sister of Esmée, "that is what I fear, that after so long a time of the solitude of two, he will——" Her trick of dropping a thing into space like that left it singularly clear.

They came back. Marise heard of them through several people. It was just before a ball of which people were all talking. Of course they would be at the ball.

Her husband said to her that day, "To-night you must be very beautiful, and you must be very brilliant, and whatever you feel, you must not let anyone see."

When she was dressed, and the carriage was waiting, and his man had come already twice to tell her maid that Monsieur le Comte was ready, she still stood in the middle of her room, on the little dim, old blue carpet, which she had succeeded with some difficulty in reaching, and beyond which, it seemed, she could not go. It was a wonderful carpet that had come from a mosque of Ispahan, and that had been woven in the time of Shah Abbas. As she stood there, somehow, it came to her to think of people who had knelt upon that carpet, and looked toward the East, and prayed out of despair. She thought she could not get to

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the door even of her room. The man came to say a third time that Monsieur le Comte was waiting.

It was odd how quite irrelevant thoughts came to her.

Once, in the midst of those five years, she had happened on a book of her husband's—she thought it was *Marcus Aurelius*—in which he had marked some words, and evidently, from the opening of the book at once to the place, turned often to them. At the time she had not thought much of the words, and it was strange that they should come back to her now, as she stood on the carpet of ancient prayers, "Pain that lasts can be borne." She knew now what these words must have meant to her husband. And from her knowledge, now, they came to have meaning for her. It was a pain that was going to last. And, just because it was going to last, it could be borne. It must be borne. She told herself that she could bear it—just because it was a pain that would last, it was bearable. She could get to the door, and down the stairs and to the carriage.

"Pain that lasts can be borne." She kept saying it to herself while she drove with her husband through the stately, quiet, dark streets of the quarter. He kept up a very courteous, unflagging conversation, as he always did, while they drove. He talked about the projected widening of some street,

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and about a Chardin someone had bought somewhere. And she could listen and could even answer him. "Pain that lasts can be borne," so she could say, "I suppose it is inevitable, with the increase of traffic, but those fine old houses, it seems a pity." Because "Pain that lasts can be borne," she could say, "That's not much, is it, to give for a Chardin?" All the way she was telling herself, "Pain that lasts can be borne."

She could bear it in the great lighted, crowded rooms while she talked to people.

It would be just as it had always been. She would know the moment he came into the room, as always she had known. And she could bear it.

She would know the instant he caught sight of her, and her eyes would meet his, and she could bear it.

He would come then at once to her. He would know just how charmingly to greet her in the crowd, and she could bear it. He would introduce to her the little Esmée, who was not pretty at all, and she could bear it. She could see him turn away from her, quite carelessly, to some other woman. She could see him turn to some other woman, eagerly as once he had turned to her, and she could bear it. Or perhaps he would even turn like that,—in the way he had once turned to her,—now, to the little Esmée, and she could bear it.

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There would be all the days, and the months, and the years, and she could bear it.

While she drove to the dance with Louis, and he talked, and she answered, she knew just what the pain would be, and how unceasing, and that she could bear it.

But suddenly there came a thought to her, that never had come before. Every other thought was gone before it, driven out by it, blotted away. And it left her with no sense of anything else in the whole of the world.

It was that, perhaps, there, come to her after all the endless days again, in the glare, in the crowd, with Esmée there, quite close, and Louis there, quite close, and the love, that, through the five years, had been starlight and rainbow clad in illusion, now there was no illusion left—turned horrible, he would, with a look and a word, change all the pain to happiness. Perhaps, when he should smile down at her, his eyes would have all the beautiful, dear, false meanings for her, that she would again believe in. Perhaps, when he should speak to her, his voice would be the beautiful lie that would mean more to her than ever could any truth. Perhaps the touch of his hand, in the instant he should be holding hers, would have for her its same old mastery. Perhaps, in an instant, all the pain would be turned into happiness.

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And as she drove with her courteous, correct husband to the ball, where she must keep up appearances, she knew, horribly well, how that one thing—happiness, she could not bear.

Esmée, in the carriage, driving to the ball, sat silent beside Constant. He did not speak at all to her, or even look down at her.

They had a long drive from their own place near the Parc Monceau to the hôtel de Navarreux in the rue de Varenne. She sat huddled in her swan's-down cloak, silent, not moving.

In that drive it was as it was always with them, in all their life. That silence was like the silence of all their life together. In the two years since their marriage she had felt that no word they either of them spoke ever broke the silence. Just as in all their nearness, alone together, they never touched.

Now, as they drove, he was close to her. She was intensely conscious, as she always was, of their not touching. So close to him, it was always for her as if there were some delicate musical instrument that was keyed too high, over toned, and that must break in such silence.

Theirs were such cruel silences, never the silences of intimacy. Before their marriage, he had taken more or less pains to talk to her. "What a charm-

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ing dress! You like to dance? And do you ride? The shooting is excellent, is it not, about Grange au Bois?" She had thought, "When we know one another better, he will talk of real things." And in their silences, then, she had thought, "It is because he is not, any more than I, interested in these trivial things. By and by, when we talk of things that mean much to us, it will be different."

Even of her own little short, uneventful life she had so much to tell him. She wanted to tell him of all the things she had loved; of her big, old room at Grange au Bois in the tower, its windows that looked four ways, the wonder of dawns and sunsets that came to it; of moonlight on the tapestries; of the château gardens, the Bosquet de la Reine, the statues, that glimmered white in the dusk of the yew trees, the pond with water like jade, so green and still; the pierced allée, that was dark even in summer noons; she wanted to tell him of her days and hours; and of her bullfinch that whistled seven tunes; she wanted to tell him of Miss, who had been kind to her, and had let her do lessons out of doors; and of the curé who had been kind to her also, and who had never been farther away from his little white, square-towered church than to St. Ouen, across the forest. She wanted to tell him of the mystery life seemed to her, the glorious, utter mystery; of her love of it,

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and her fear of it, her sense of being so small in it, and so much at a loss, and so in need of guidance. She wanted to talk to him of her loneliness. She wanted him to know how she knew of everyone's loneliness; she wanted to come, so, to him, in the loneliness that must have been his, as it had been hers, as it was, she knew, all the world's, till love came.

And she wanted to tell him of her dreams. Passionately she had wanted to tell him of all the wonderful beautiful things she longed for and believed in.

But he had never cared to hear.

She had imagined how one would talk of everything, all one's dearest, loveliest things, when the time came, with the one that one loved, who would care and understand.

And what would have been so happy in all the world, as to have had Constant care and understand?

She had actually thought it would be like that. It had taken her quite long to realise that he and she, however close they were together,—in all their life, just as in the half-hour here in the carriage, driving to the Navarreux ball,—however terribly close they were, could never talk of things, and understand.

It seemed to her that this silent drive side by

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side typified the whole of it. In his bored, impatient silence she kept silence. The harp, the violin, the music thing, whatever it was, that she always felt, too tensely strung, to-night seemed strained nearer to breaking point even than usual. She did not know why.

Perhaps it was because to-night at the ball she was for the first time to be among people who had shared in the years of his life that she had had no part in.

Perhaps there would be beautiful women at the ball whom he had known when she was a little girl with Miss, at her lessons and her play.

Any one of these women whom she might meet, or only pass in the crowd, might have meant much to him, have been loved by him, been a part of the life that he had lived without her.

She wanted to ask him about those other women.

She would not have asked curiously, only she wanted to be brought into some nearness to that part of his life which was to her so unknown and far away.

He had lived so much without her.

She would not have asked jealously. She knew he had been the loved of many women. Even as a little girl she had heard him named by older people, talking "over her head," as the man, per-

The Street of the Brown Room

haps, the most fascinating in Paris, the hero of many stories. But she knew none of the stories.

Any one of the women she met, in this, her first going into the world, might know that part of his life she did not know, might be nearer to him than she.

It hurt her cruelly to know that.

And yet she had it in her heart to feel very kindly towards those other women. If he had talked to her, there in the carriage, he might have told her anything, she would have understood. He might have said to her, "I loved this one, or that one." Even he might have said, "I love her yet." And she would have borne it better than she could bear the silence.

It seemed to her, even, that after the first pain, she could come to understand and to be sorry for him, and tender to him, and to try to make up to him for the loss of a happiness that the queer ways of life had denied him. She could have emptied her heart of all but pity and tenderness for any woman who had meant much to him.

She had it in her heart to say to him, "I've come, in this time, to understand. I know that things have to be as they have to be in the world. And I know the hardness of it. And I'm sorry. And, I beg of you, let me help to make it less hard."

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It was so in her heart to say that, that it seemed as if she must say it. She must cry it out, breaking the endless silence.

It seemed to her then, as always, so, that she must break, with a cry, with a clutch, perhaps, somehow, anyhow, this terrible silence, his and hers, the silence of all their life. She must break the silence that was between them as they drove so close together in the carriage, and she must break the silence that was there between them in all their lives.

She turned to him suddenly, looking up at him in the light of the carriage lamp. "Constant, please listen. I love you enough to understand anything, everything——"

He looked down at her with that quick, sharp look he sometimes had, as of expecting one to be hiding something, to have some deeper meaning in one's words. He did not speak to her.

Very timidly she went on, "It would so comfort me—if there were any small way in which I could help you."

"I don't know what you are talking about," he said.

She saw his brows draw together. She knew he saw the tears that came to her eyes, and that he was annoyed.

"What is the matter?" he said sharply.

Every One's Hour

She said, "I—I—never mind. What a long drive it is!"

She leaned forward, turning her face from him, as if to look out of the window, that he might not see any more tears. "Where are we?" she said, just to say something, fearing he'd go back to that, her poor little venture that had failed. "Where are we?" she asked.

He glanced out of his window. "The street of the brown room," he said, laughing.

Every One's Hour

SHE was always making little jests that no one ever laughed at, and bringing in little gifts that no one ever wanted, flinging her enthusiasm against blank walls, and lavishing her infinite sympathy on people who did not care.

Her emotions were such misfits, the finest and highest and most beautiful of them were made to amuse one by her shyness of their wearing. It was as if she, little and stooping and pale, should put on trailing court robes of gold and velvet and ermine. It was to fancy a queen's crown on her timidly hung, little, rather grey head.

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Her world was very small, and her dreams were too great for it. Her dreams were without limit, and she never ceased dreaming them, and always was confused by them, bewildered by them, in her life's so narrow spaces. It was as if always she stood not knowing what to do with her dreams. As if, because of far visions, she could not see real things clearly. The light was too beautiful.

She was colourless, and she saw all things in the colours of dreams, colours that never were.

She saw love, as it passed by, and loved it—and one couldn't help being amused. It was so quaint to think of her reading the poetry of love, dreaming over it. She tried to tell her sister's and brother's children, stories of fair ladies and knights without fear, but the children were never interested.

She marked things in books for people to read, and then did not dare to show them. In her little books of devotion she marked all the things about strength, the right hand that upholds, and about those who shall mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. It frightened her, and she confessed it to the abbé, that she loved the splendid, old outcryings of the prophets better than the lives of the blessed saints. The abbé murmured something suitable for any occasion, not having quite caught what she said.

Every One's Hour

Just once she showed the marked passages of her prophet Isaiah to someone—who wondered why, for an instant, and never thought of it again.

She never had anything to say to anyone, except in the moments when she forgot her poor, little, shy self, and said too much, and said it to quite the wrong people. Then she might have been rather wonderful, had she been someone else, but, because she was herself, no one thought of it.

When people heard she was dead, they said, "Poor little thing—we never asked her to dinner!" or, "Poor little thing—I was always meaning to go and see her!" And the whole world went to the old hôtel, now that its shabby door was magnificent in black and silver and that the grand black catafalque was there, between the candles; and now that she, who so had loved flowers, could not see or smell or touch them, all people sent them, crosses of violets and wreaths of white roses. Nobody knew that it had been red roses she always loved best. Everyone who had forgotten her remembered her.

Motors crowded the old narrow street, and great names were scrawled in pencil in the pad in the porter's lodge.

And she, lying dressed in white, in a long, black box, with the flowers heaped about, in the light of many candles, and in all the pomp and circum-

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stance and ceremony of death, with the abbé most attentive, and everybody who had laughed grown solemn, had her little hour of greatness.

Medicis Fountain

THE special melancholy that there is always in that garden seemed to hang like a heavy thing in the soft, thick, yellow autumn afternoon, and to be gathered densely about the fountain. Wet yellow leaves were falling softly all the time about the fountain and lay on the dark water and deep in the paths. There was much fluttering of pigeons and sparrows about the fountain, and people came and went.

It was a Thursday afternoon, and the band was playing under the trees by the gate of the Boulevard Saint Michel.

The beds of the parterre down below were full of scarlet salvia, and the children's toy ships sailed the basin.

And yet the melancholy was there.

It seemed as if it were a thing left over from times long ago and people long dead. It was as if it were something that remained behind always,

Medicis Fountain

of whatever of melancholy had been in the hearts of people who had passed through the garden since the days when Marie de Medicis gave such fine fêtes. It was a melancholy of great names that everyone knows, and of great memories. And it was that other melancholy which is of fanciful names and light footfall, of Harlequin and Columbine and Pierrot, of out-in-the-heel dancing and of laughter at all things, "de peur d'être obligé d'en pleurer," the poor, little, wistful, gay melancholy, the special lightness of tragedy, of those travellers of the road to Prague whose footsteps leave no mark.

It was the melancholy that is so curiously special to France, that comes to Paris from the fields and the hills, from ancient towns, half-forsaken, and forests that belong no more to kings; from blue sails of fishing boats and old grey harbours, from calls of seabirds on desolate beaches, and nightingales' songs in olive groves; and little odd things, the jester's bauble, the fans of Watteau's time, and wooden shoes, and high-heeled satin slippers. It was the melancholy of France that has no tragic gesture, that only laughs and sings to the moon, that is in the rhythm of dances and the refrain of ballads, "Mironton, mironton, mirontaine."

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Ghosts

THE drum was sounding through the garden, where the autumn night was come already, and where there were but few people left to pass out, through the dusk, before the closing of the gates.

The lamps of the Boulevard Saint Michel were lighted, and of the street under the dome of the Panthéon. But by the gate there, away somewhat from the lamps, and in the mistiness of the bare trees, there was so little light that the people passing out seemed mysterious, shadow people, part of the deepening sense of its all being haunted.

Mothers and grandmothers, with gathered-up knitting, shepherded the children out; the children ran and called; people passed on their way from work, girls with bare heads, men in blouses, the glow of a man's pipe lighting his face out from the shadows, the patter of a girl's high-heeled little shoes coming through the shadows and going on to the sounds of the street; a girl's laugh, a boy's laugh; the crying of a child; a scolding voice; quick figures and slow figures; erect figures, stooping figures; footsteps of youth, old tired footsteps; so many footsteps and so many figures, all with something of mystery about them in the shadows.

The Sand Barge

The footsteps passed out to the lights of the Boulevard Saint Michel, on the going of various ways. They came through the shadows, and went those same old roads by which so many people for so long had gone. To-night's footsteps died away after all the others in the shadows.

And the haunting of it had no more to do with the ages ago than with the moment, and one's own standing there.

The Sand Barge

IN the black thick winter night, that was come early to Paris, at the hour when the world was going home to and fro across the bridges, there was passing under the Bridge of the Concorde a string of broad flat black sand barges towed by a little tug, and trailing a wide long wake in the black water.

In one of the last of the barges there was a hollow scooped out in the sand and a huge fire blazing. The flames soared up red and gold and clear and high, and the black figures of the men moved against the glow; and their great black shadows moved with them where the firelight was red on the sand. The red flames struck magnifi-

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cently out of the black night, and the men's black figures moved against the light of the fire with something of splendour that they got from the clash of black and red.

It was a thing shown, as if with blare of trumpets, to hurried tired people who could not see it.

Twenty Francs

THE little girl who brought the hat from the milliner's in the rue de la Paix was a very little girl. She might have been twelve, but she did not look it, as she stood in the bright anteroom of the apartment at the Ritz.

The anteroom was full of boxes that the maid was packing. Beautiful things were thrown about everywhere, dresses and wraps and hats.

The little girl stood stupidly in the midst of it. Her eyes looked stupidly out from under a mat of brown hair and the rim of a dreary brown hat. She had a black worsted scarf around her neck—the ends of it were not long enough to cover her hollow chest—and her jacket was very thin. She held the carton, almost as big as herself, in a hand that was bare, and very small, and quite blue with the cold.

Twenty Francs

It was a horribly cold night out of doors. Even in a charming apartment at the Ritz one could hear the rage of the February wind.

The little girl gave the carton to the maid, and the maid took it to the room beyond, to her mistress. The maid was English. She was a very good woman, and she was sorry for the little girl who looked so forlorn. She told her mistress about the little girl. The mistress was a very good woman too. The maid came back with a twenty-franc gold piece. The little girl stood waiting, stupidly staring at nothing.

The maid gave her the twenty-franc gold piece. "That is for you," she said in English. The little girl looked stupidly at it. She held it, and looked at it, and then looked up at the maid. "That's for you," said the maid again, always in English. The little girl still did not seem to understand.

The maid opened the door of the anteroom and spoke to one of the hotel men-servants in the corridor. "Gustave, tell the little girl that the twenty francs are for her."

He was a very correct, smart-looking servant. He spoke kindly enough to the little girl.

She looked from the maid to him, and then at the gold piece again. Then she said things in a stupid little voice, as dull and cold and tired as her way of standing there.

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While she spoke, the man's face came to be a quite different face, not a smart servant's face any more. The maid thought he was angry for some reason.

She said to him, "What is it? It's no use expecting gratitude. What does she say?"

The servant said, "Gratitude!" after her, in a tone as sharp as a gentleman's. "Gratitude!" then he laughed. "Gratitude! She says that four francs is the most her sister ever gets from any man in the Boulevard Sebastopol. She says her sister told her so the night their mother was dying, and she had to get twenty francs for the doctor."

"Oh," said the maid, "how horrible! Run away, little girl!"

The little girl half stopped in the door. The man spoke to her in that voice that was not like a smart, correct servant's voice.

"What was it?" asked the maid. "What did you say to her?"

"She was going to be grateful," answered the man-servant, shrugging his shoulders, "and I said to her, 'that—no.'"

Miss

WHEN Stéfanie was twenty-three, she had been married for nearly five years, and had, in those five years, been given all the pleasant things that are the due of such pretty, clever, little, young, gay, fine ladies as she, in the "beautiful world" of Paris.

She had been taken into the beautiful world by one step, as it were, out of her childhood. It was as if she had been led through the green baize door of the nursery passage, directly into a ballroom, where the lights never went out and the music never stopped, and the flowers never faded, and all the people danced always. They had opened the green baize door to a ballroom, and she had entered delightedly in, straight, so, from the dull, shabby blue room where she had done lessons with Miss.

She had had bread and chocolate there with Miss, for the last time, that last afternoon. She had been very pleased that she was to be married at Sainte Clothilde to-morrow. She wondered why dear, plain, elderly, good English Miss—who had been with her since she could remember, a part of her life as much as the bread and chocolate—

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should be so odd about it. Her mother and father were very pleased.

It was five years before she understood why Miss had cried.

For five years she herself had stayed, the whole of the time, just very pleased, as her father and mother had always been.

Then there happened to Stéfanie, at twenty-three, to understand the thing of which it was that Miss had wept in prophecy. It was all in one moment.

She and the tall, nice boy of the brown eyes were having the five o'clock, quite by themselves. They had known one another so long—all the five years—and so beautifully well, so exquisitely and wonderfully well. However could she have dreamed it was a thing to weep over? However could she have known that a thing so right could be wrong, that so happy a thing could be sad?

They sat in the salon of the dragons, where was all the priceless chinoiserie that Stéfanie's husband had spent more than half his fifty years collecting. Stéfanie was always afterwards to be afraid of the two great green-and-yellow dragons by the hearth, and of the little deformed, gorgeous-coloured old men on the chimney-shelf, and the white dogs with their flat faces, as if they had been live, alien things that had heard and seen and might tell.

There was a great white vase on an ebony stand close to the tea-table, that had always pleased her for the repetition it held, in its irised curves, of the room and of people. Last night she had been watching the firelight in the vase, and had suddenly seen there that her husband in the firelight was not reading at all the book he sat huddled over, but was just looking and looking at her, under his heavy brows. His eyes had met her eyes in the white vase.

Now it amused her to make the boy lean forward and look at her there, and their eyes meet, laughing.

Afterwards she was to be afraid of the vase always, for those two faces it had shown her so.

But in that minute, while she and the boy looked at one another there, she was not afraid, and she laughed.

It was so nice having tea with him. She had buttered his brown bread for him.

He moved in the white vase, and leaned toward her.

“Stéfanie!” he said. “Stéfanie!”

She had read books in which men had told their love in many words. He told his in just the way he said her name.

“Stéfanie!” he said, and her heart leaped.

Her heart—it was no more her heart; it was a

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wild, mad thing, that his saying of her name, just his saying of her name, had made alive. That new, that wild heart, not hers, his, of his making, leaped to her throat and stayed there, and throbbed and struggled there.

“Stéfanie!”

She had read of happiness. It had taken many words, in the books she had read, to tell of happiness. But he told of it, all of it, in the one word that was her name, “Stéfanie!”

She leaned toward him in the light of the fire. He put his hands out, and she put her hands in them.

With her hands in his, she knew things. She knew that it was because of him she had been happy for five years. He had been all the reason of her happiness. He had been her reason for everything.

Because of him she had been pretty, and had laughed and danced, and had pleased people. Because of him she had thought that the world was good, and had tried to be good in it. Because of him she had thought that life was a beautiful thing, and had dreamed beautiful dreams of it. All that was best of her had been because of him, and he had been her happiness.

“Stéfanie!” he said.

Miss

The beating of that wild, new heart; that he had made to live, that was for him, was in her throat and in her eyes. She was dumb with it, and blind. It was in her hands. She thought that he must feel it in her hands. Everything she had was going out to him through the tips of her fingers. Her self was passing to him. If they had drawn all her blood away through the tips of her fingers, it could not have hurt more. And if some drawing away of her life-blood had left her soul free in heaven, it could not have been more beautiful, happier.

His hands that held hers were burning. Through the beating and the blindness she felt his look. His eyes must be lighted with the light her soul would pass into.

Her soul was passing.

He said, "Stéfanie!"

She thought that she was dying, and it was to cease without regret.

He said, "Stéfanie!"

She threw her head back and he kissed her throat, where the heart had been struggling that was now escaped to him.

Her throat was quiet when he kissed it.

All that had ever been was fallen quite away. There was a new heaven and a new earth. It was

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the end, and it was the beginning. It was wonderfully and gloriously right. It was the happiest thing in the world.

But she thought, for a minute, of the old, faded blue nursery, and knew, for a minute, why Miss had cried.

Little Brides

THE streets around Sainte Clothilde were full of little white brides, their veils and ribbons and full stiff skirts winging in the breeze of the chilly, grey morning. Mass was just over at Sainte Clothilde. The day before had been First Communion there.

The mid-May morning was so cold that all the mothers had brought white wraps for bundling up the little brides. Little white brides were being taken away in cabs, and auto-taxis, and in beautiful big automobiles, and in shabby, old-fashioned carriages, and by the Grenelle-St. Lazare omnibus.

Little delicate brides, going home to old beautiful rooms between court and garden, daughters of a race that can be fanatic, that has need of a dream; little daughters of the bourgeoisie, round and rosy, very serious, thinking of comfortable things; little brides of poverty, clumsy boots at the edge of cheap

Playing Soldiers

white skirts, little brides all of them so prettily important—why was one sad, and almost afraid, watching them? Saints and martyrs, visions and dreams and sacrifices and renunciations, chatter of everybody crowding into the taxi, splashing of mud from the omnibus, quiet closing of carriage door—it was not only that one felt the loneliness of the ideal, so curiously a thing of every day, and of such utter mystery.

Perhaps it was that life opened too vast and dim a country for the little brides to travel. It was as if the shadow of things to come to them out of life, were cast before, dark, upon the grey morning. Perhaps it was because of unknown things, coming, that one was sad, and afraid, for the little brides. Or perhaps it was only because they were so very young, and their dresses were so white.

Playing Soldiers

IN the garden of the Invalides, where already the leaves were falling, the little brother and sister, in their black school pinafores, played “soldiers” together, while the mother and the grandmother sat by on a bench, the young woman knitting a grey

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sock, the old woman, with her hands quiet in her nice black lap, looking away at nothing.

The little brother and sister marched up and down the path, from the tree with the bushes round it to the tree that was covered with yellow vine, and back again, he with a toy gun, she with her hoop stick over her shoulder. "Right foot, left foot, right foot, left foot."

As they passed the bench the mother looked up from her knitting. "Eh, Mariette, out of step, I declare! How's that now? If father saw, what would he say?" She marked time with the knitting needles and the grey sock. "Right foot, left foot."

"Halt!" ordered the little brother. "Present arms. Arms right, arms left,—left, Mariette, I tell thee! Carry arms. Forward—march."

"Forward—march," suddenly echoed the grandmother. Suddenly she was sitting up brave and proud on the bench. Her old, deep-sunk eyes, vague and blue, were lighted suddenly. For a moment it was as if her eyes shone with the light of some great glory that she looked to. "Vive la France!" she cried out in her shrill high voice, a thrill in it of old, unhappy, far-off things and battles long ago. It was as if her eyes that had seen France live through defeat, shone with knowledge of victory. It was the soul of France that shone in

Potatoes and War

her eyes. "Forward—march!" she cried to the children.

Her daughter on the bench beside her said to her gently, "There now, dear, there," patting her knee to quiet her.

The old woman fell silent again. Her hands lay together in her lap, and her eyes were dim again. She did not see the children as they marched up and down the path, from the tree of the bushes to the tree of the vine. She looked away into nothing and waited patiently.

Potatoes and War

ALL morning in the fire zone of Paris the young lieutenant had watched the old woman who was digging potatoes.

It was a day of the season of market gardens in the year of desolation. Paris was breached with cannon and burned with petrol. One was growing used to the lightning and thunder of war. The storms of two sieges had kept Death so close to Paris and for so long, that it had come to be part of life, accepted as of every day and commonplace.

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There, where the young lieutenant was on picket duty and the old woman was digging potatoes, shells had, for months, been coming and coming again, to blaze black trails through the silver stems of the poplars or to smoke up the good earth of the fields.

In the fields someone was burning brushwood, and the smell of its smoke mingled with the smell of the gunpowder smoke. The two smokes together hung in the mist that lay along the river. It was a misty blue day, and the smoke of cannon made beautiful little sudden white clouds in the soft veiled sunshine.

The young lieutenant walked up and down past the rows of the old woman's potatoes, and would have given anything in the world, except the one thing it would have cost him, to be able to get away to where the smell of fields was not all mingled with the smell of war.

Once a shell burst so close to the old woman and to him that the broken black hot bits of it were all about them.

Then he said to her almost angrily, "My God, granny, why don't you get away out of this?"

She was a little thin doubled-up old woman with a face like a nutcracker; one imagined her nose and chin snapping together. She lifted her head and looked at him out of sunken vague old eyes.

Little Soldier without Name

“Why don’t you get away?” he asked her again.

“Why don’t you?” she asked him.

“I?” he said. “I? I cannot. I must stay.”

He was so young that he added proudly, “I must do my duty.”

She said, “Eh? B’en, what will you? I also must do mine.” She went back to her digging of potatoes.

Little Soldier without Name

THIS happened on the 24th of May, 1871, when Paris, shattered and charred, had been for the most part retaken by the army of Versailles, and the Communards, driven back upon the heights of Père Lachaise and Belleville and Montmartre, fighting to frenzy in their lost cause, were still holding as their supreme citadel the Fort of Ivry, and pouring fire from it upon the Fort of Bicêtre, that at last the Government troops occupied.

The young lieutenant, coming from Sceaux, was carrying important messages to the Commandant of the fort of the Bicêtre.

He had an escort of six hussards. He was very splendid with the new hongroise of his uniform and the two bright galons of his képi.

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At the edge of the trenches a little soldier stopped him. It was a very French little soldier, intimate and friendly with an officer, no more afraid of rank than of war.

"Where do you go, my lieutenant, with your six hussards?"

"To the Fort of Bicêtre carrying orders."

"You will never get there like that, my lieutenant. From the left, from the roofs of Gentilly, the Communards beat your way with fire, and from the right their cannons cover it from the Fort of Ivry."

"I must get there," said the lieutenant.

Afterwards, in the years, he went back to that place and realised how pitiful the thing was that had happened there, but at the time he scarcely thought of it.

He was only thinking what in the world to do, and he said again, "I must get there."

The little soldier said, "Very well, then, my lieutenant, we will go together. Possibly I can take you. You know nothing of the trenches, but I have been two months in them. You must do exactly as I say."

The lieutenant looked over the way he had to go, and he said to the little soldier, "Tell me what to do."

The little soldier said, "Leave your escort and leave your horse."

Little Soldier without Name

The lieutenant dismounted his six hussards in the shelter of a hollow of the land there, and ordered them to wait, keeping his horse.

The little soldier said, "Now follow close behind me. When I say 'Run,' then run. And when I say, 'Drop down on your hands and knees and crawl,' then do so. When I say, 'Get up,' you may get up. Whatever I tell you, you must do instantly. And do not speak to me."

Then they began their journey. The cannon always belched and thundered from the right, and the bullets came always whistling from the housetops and windows on the left. There would be the hiss of a shell, and the world would shake with its explosion. Sometimes they could run for a little way, but most of the time they had to crawl on their hands and knees. Sometimes they had to lie flat and wait. It was running and dropping down and crawling and springing up and dashing for it and dropping again, absurdly, like that, in successive bounds, that they got over the ground through the fall of hot, red rain. Once the little soldier got a chance—one knee on the ground, sitting on his other heel—to draw on a group on a housetop that had been potting at them as if at rabbits. "En voilà un dégoté," he said as a man fell. It took them terribly long to get to the fortress. They had to make their way all around the Bicêtre to

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get to the entrance of it that was on the side of the ramparts of Paris, opposite where they were come up from the direction of Sceaux. And it was only when they were at the drawbridge that the young lieutenant dared to speak.

He was turning to thank the little soldier, and then he had that stunned sense people came in those days to know so well, of somebody's being shot, oneself, the man beside one.

For an instant he did not know if it were not he himself who was shot.

But it was the little soldier's body that fell, with a bullet through the head.

The lieutenant spread his handkerchief over the little soldier's face, and got into the fort with the messages.

At the time it was just part of everything.

But afterwards he was to wish he had known the little soldier's name.

November Second

ALL the flowers of Paris that day, with the florists and in the markets, in the stalls at the street corners and in the push-carts, everywhere, were white and purple flowers, sad in the sad grey day, white

November Second

chrysanthemums and white and purple asters and violets and white roses that lived to die on graves. The streets about the cemeteries were lined with imitation flowers of tin and zinc, wreaths and anchors and crosses, that when one was young one had not liked to think of as being given to those who in death were gone so far from tawdriness. When one was grown older and had come to be better able to understand sorrow, there was something that touched one in the very tawdriness and ignorance of those little offerings to the dead, something of attempt and failure. The offering of such ignorant things to the dead, of whom the humblest are so very strangely great and beautiful, was touching, as are all mistaken little poor efforts of love. The dead, coming there and seeing, must feel about it, "They thought to give us pleasure."

The streets were full of people in deep mourning. It was a soft, still day. One fancied the dead came back for a little, in the grey, soft stillness, that one so intensely felt, for all the confusion of people's coming and going.

Up and down the white and purple streets the people in black came and went.

And one thought of the dead as being very sorry for them, as being touched by the father's shining, stiff black gloves, that were too long in the fingers, and by the grandmother's having trudged all the

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way, and by the mother's having put so much crêpe on her bonnet, and by the band of crêpe on the sleeve of the man's white blouse, and by the baby's not noticing any of it.

Two Griefs

IN the florist's shop two women stood looking at one another among the white and purple flowers. All the flowers of Paris that day were white and purple, for it was the day of the dead. It was a still, soft, dark day, heavy with pent-up rain, as that day always is, for the taking of flowers to the cemeteries.

The older woman was dressed in deep mourning, her veil over her face. She was tall and slight. The girl, looking up at her, could make out, through the veil, that there was a wave of grey in her dark hair, drawn back from her forehead, and that the outline of her face was very clear-cut and white. She was a great lady; the painted and tawdry little girl had seen that from the first glance at her as she came into the shop.

The girl did not wear mourning. Her dress was so poor that it made her seem oddly out of place

Two Griefs

in a grand shop like the florist's. The lady, looking down at her, saw that she was quite beautiful. There was something in her eyes that the painting of them did not take away, and there was something about her mouth that the scarlet did not hurt at all.

There was a heap of white violets on the table by which the two women stood.

The man of the shop had been about to wrap up the violets for the girl, but when the lady came and asked for white violets he hesitated, with the three-cornered folds of wrapping paper in his hands. The lady had said that it was only white violets she wanted—nothing else would do. And those the girl had bought were all he had or could get anywhere that day. And it was the fine lady, of course, he desired to please. He hesitated, and looked from one woman to the other. He said, "Madame, I regret it infinitely, but infinitely. These are all the white violets I have, Madame, that this moment Mademoiselle has taken. What can I do, Madame? Unless Mademoiselle were to——"

The lady said to the girl, "Mademoiselle, there must be other flowers you could take. It is that for me there are only these."

The girl said, "I have searched all Paris to find them. There are none to be had in the markets or

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the booths or the push-carts, or with the other grand florists, anywhere."

The woman said, "If I cannot find them—if I cannot find them anywhere——" It was odd the way she said it. She put up one hand in its black glove and pushed the veil back from her face, as if not caring at all, in her wish to see the girl's face, that the girl should see what was in hers.

Anyone could have seen in her face, that death had had for her both sting and bitterness in it.

She said to the girl, "I want them for someone who used to love them best of all flowers."

The girl said, "They were the flowers the one I want them for loved best too."

The man of the shop was folding the paper round the violets and fastening down the corners with gilt pins.

"I want them for my mother," the girl said; "she used to look at them in the florists' windows. She never had any. She never had anything that was beautiful."

"You loved her?" asked the lady.

"Oh, yes," said the girl.

"And she knew it?"

"Oh, yes," said the girl again.

"She had that," said the lady—"you gave her that." She stood looking down closely into the little painted face. Anyone could have seen in

The Risk

the girl's face that, for her, death had no sting or bitterness. "I envy you," said the lady, and drew her veil down again to hide her face.

The girl came nearer to her with a sudden, swift movement. "Oh, Madame, the one you loved, who is dead, did not know——" She stopped herself short, realising what she had said.

The lady turned and would have left the shop.

But the girl went past her, pushing her aside rudely, and was at the door, and was out of it.

The Risk

SHE was more lonely even than usual, that November afternoon, in the wet Paris streets, when she came away from the two of them and their happiness.

All the way home, in the motor, with the black, wet, thick, soft night, and the blur of lights, and the blur of sounds pressing in about her, close, in the wet, she had been envying them.

But, as she went over it, alone, in her long hours by the fire, she came, slowly, to be glad that she did not have to run the risk of it, of the great danger of happiness.

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Christmas Crowd

THERE was a mist folded round Paris, the bare trees stood up out of it, and the noises of the city came through it blurred and softened, dim as through folds of velvet. The low, wet sky sagged down along the dark massing of the roofs. On the Grands Boulevards the advertising signs of electric lights threw down colour after colour on the confusion of the world's comings and goings.

Those words written in gold upon the sky ought to have been beautiful words—what words could have been beautiful enough to warrant being shown so to a people? Love, pain, eternity, death. It was strange that those were not the words shown in golden lights to the crowds of the Boulevards.

The mist made little halos round the tables on the café terraces, where the braziers smouldered in red and blue. The mist got into the booths that lined the pavements, and made their oil lamps shine yellower than gold. The tawdry little affairs for sale in the baraques got quite a magnificence from the gold light. And the faces of the people passed and passed in the gold light.

Some of them were quite dreadful faces, miserable and sinister.

The Church by the River

It was not a beautiful world at all, nor a good world. But it was a great, wonderful, close, touching, intimate thing, infinite and near, that one needed, that had need of one, in whose whole one had part, intensely. It was a beautiful, terrible thing, that was there, always, to be turned to, one's sense of it never to be in any words told of, a refuge in its great sadness from all the little sadness of oneself.

The Church by the River

It was as if the winter mood of the city outside had been drawn into the church and was held there, gathered, accumulated and intensified, a mood in which fear had curiously a part. The mood of the river close under the church was not stranger or more sad. Indeed it was the same mood. The river and the church together meant Paris.

Perhaps already, in the winter afternoon, the Boulevards were lighted. But they did not mean Paris.

Some people say it is a gay city, but how utterly sad it is.

Always and always the motif of it is the river. It is as if every street led there, and every life.

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And how closely the church belongs with the river, inseparably.

That day the river was very dark and sad and sinister. And it was very dark in the church.

The columns of the aisles and nave rose into darkness, and the high lift of the arches was lost in darkness. One scarcely discerned the windows against the dark sky. Only to the left, by the door of the north aisle, there was a great blur of light.

One could not at all see the crib, nor Mary and Joseph and the child in the straw, nor the ox and the grey ass, only the denseness of the candle-light about it, like a glory for it, and some strange dim figures that knelt against the starry haze of tapers.

The figures seemed not to be of real people at all. It was as if they were some shaping into stone of prayers that through ages had been prayed before the child in the crib. It was as if the dim passing of prayers, the drift and breath and shadow, and the loneliness, and the hopelessness, and the yet sadder hopefulness, had been arrested and fixed, made part of the church's stone, as hard and cold as the stone was, and eternally so, before the child in the crib.

There was the figure of a young man with hunched shoulders and sunken head; and of a

The Church by the River

woman, kneeling but with her head lifted as she looked straight at the crib; an old man's bent figure standing up as straight as it could; a child's figure, a little girl, tiptoeing to look; and there was the crouched figure of a very old woman huddled in her chair. They seemed to be all perfectly still.

Never had there been a place so still as the church. It was silent with a silence that belonged to the dark. The darkness and the stillness belonged absolutely together.

There was a sound that belonged to them both; it was so much a part of the stillness and the darkness, and of the something very strange there was there, that, somehow, it did not seem strange at all.

It was the crying of a very little baby. It seemed to come out of the haze of light. It was not strange; of course, he would have cried like that before the kneeling wise men, under the star of the East. Of course, he would have been crying in the manger, between the ox and the grey ass.

But it was not the baby in the manger that was crying.

It was another baby, and it was crying in the chapel beyond the crib.

Beyond the crib, and beyond the haze of light, and past the old woman who sold candles on the edge of the light, asleep, huddled in her shawl, there was the chapel of the baptisms.

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It was there that the baby was crying.

In the dark depths of the chapel one could not make out any figures at all.

There was a sound of steps down the aisle, and there was a light coming—coming very strangely through the darkness.

It was a little choir boy carrying a taper before the priest down the long aisle to the chapel of the fountain. The two of them came through the shadows with the taper, and went into the chapel. The light of the taper showed the dark stone and dark wood carving of the chapel, and showed that there were waiting there an old woman in a white cap and a young man who held the baby in his arms.

The woman and the man stood up and the baby stopped crying. The little choir boy—reaching up with difficulty, he was so little—fixed the taper on the stand at the fountain, and the priest spoke to the grandmother and the father, and went about getting out a heavy large book from some stand or cupboard against the chapel wall behind the fountain.

The baby had stopped crying to stare at the light of the taper. It stared at the light with its little vague unblinking eyes. The father had brought it nearer to the light and was holding it to look. The grandmother had come nearer, too,

The Church by the River

to watch the baby. The light of the taper in the dark chapel showed quite wonderfully the woman's old wrinkled face, and the man's young face, and the funny little face of the baby, and the priest's face that was old too.

Farther on, in the darkness of the aisle, there was a little group of people, all in black, gathered silently and motionless together. They might have been carved figures of stone also, part of the church, grouped, a thing that had always been there, except for a sound that had seemed at first to be a part of the dark silence, even as the baby's crying had been.

It was the sound of the difficult breathing of one who could not sob. There was something white and small that moved up and down, a handkerchief, carried from eyes to lips, and from lips to eyes again. There, in the dark silence, the black figures were gathered around a black coffin, waiting before an unlighted chapel for the priest to come.

The priest was putting out the baptismal taper in the chapel of the fountain; and the grandmother and the father were bundling up the baby in all manner of wraps, whispering together.

It would have been hard to tell what it all had to do with the river, why the mood of the dark cold river, with its many cargoes, should have so

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intensely a part in the mood of the church. Yet how they belonged together!

Before the crib, a flock of little girls in black uniform had settled down for a minute to twitter their prayers, while the Sister in charge hovered over them, the starry light on her plain good face, and the white wings of her cornette fluttering against the shadow.

The Toys in the Chapel

IN the classrooms, there were the desks and benches of the little charity girls, the blackboards with their sums worked out, their copy-books and sewing. In the dining-room, the long tables were already set, soup bowls and goblets and slices of bread, for the noon dinner, and in the courtyard, the little girls in black aprons and black shoulder capes were playing Colin Maillard.

The chapel across the courtyard was pleasantly full of the morning, the glass in the windows was so slightly stained that the grey day came into the chapel as simply as into any room. And the chapel was more like a friendly, intimate little room than the place of the worship of a Great High Priest.

The Toys in the Chapel

It was just a place that people loved and lived in. The nuns' benches were pushed about, and their books of devotion lay on the chairs; in one chair there was a woollen shawl tossed down, and in another a bit of sewing left, some grey flannel thing with the needle thrust into it. It was as if there had been built a little altar in the room of the everyday's living, to the intimate everyday glory of a dear God. The few flowers on the altar were flowers from the street corner, four sous' worth of violets, five sous' worth of tuberoses.

It was in the Christmas days, and there was the crib, in the centre of the little room, down on the floor, where the nuns and the charity children would be close about it at the offices.

It was a poor crib. Mary and Joseph and the wise men, the baby, the ox and the grey ass, the paper rocks and flowers, the cotton-wool snow were not fine at all for the charity children. And all around the crib, on the floor before its low stand, and in it, quite inside it, among the sacred things of the stable under the star, there were arranged about, carefully, the charity children's toys.

The big dolls sat on the floor before the crib. Several of them had once been quite grand dolls, but now they were all shabby, and most of them were broken. There was a hobby horse with a fine scarlet saddle and its head broken off, and

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there was a much worn, once fine, woolly dog as big as the horse. They stood behind the big dolls. The little animals from the Noah's Ark, and the little dolls—all broken too—had been found place for in the crib itself, the dolls close against Mary and Joseph and the wise men, the Noah's Ark animals ranged on each side of the ox and the grey ass.

Sister Véronique, very serious and humble and sweet in her white-winged cornette, explained to the visitor, "We let the children put them there, it gives them so much pleasure. They think the toys so honoured. They leave them there all the week."

She bent down and straightened in its place a doll that had tumbled over. It had only one arm and was difficult to balance. "All our toys are broken," she said. "Of course the rich children only send to our children the toys they do not themselves want any more."

The Ermine Muff and Stole

The Ermine Muff and Stole

It was odd in a way, when one thinks of it, that a little girl who went home at night to a miserable hole of a room, in a miserable hole of a street, should spend her days in a house that had been famous for its beauty in the days of the Sun King. The house that Louise came to at eight o'clock of the morning and left often enough after eight o'clock of the night, was really more full of beautiful things, now that a great costumier made a fad of it, than it had been in the days when the people who built it dwelt in it. In days when the Champs Elysées were a swampy market garden, and that house was the country house of princes, nobody who came there could have worn velvets and brocades and laces more beautiful than those it was the duty of Louise to pick up from where haughty vendeuses, and yet more haughty beautiful mannequins, tossed them carelessly down on the floor.

All her life Louise had been picking up beautiful things from where they were thrown down, indifferently, on magic Persian carpets and against panels that had been painted to please a king.

Since ever she was big enough to be trusted with huge cardboard boxes, all over purple and amber

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and jade green roses, out in the streets of Paris, she had been carrying beautiful things home to other people.

Louise was thirteen years old, and ugly, and she worshipped beautiful things. She had never owned a beautiful thing in her life, and she lived all her days among the most beautiful things that Paris could make of silk and lace and velvet and satin and fur.

One afternoon in December, when at half-past five it was as dark as midnight, and cold and wet as only Paris winter afternoons and midnights can be, Louise was taking home an ermine muff and stole, in the dark, down the Champs Elysées across the Place de la Concorde, across the river and round behind the Bourbon Palace, through the dim quiet streets of the Faubourg, to one of the greatest hôtels of the Faubourg, and to a lady of one of the Faubourg's greatest names.

If she had been a pretty girl she probably would not have loved the ermine muff and stole in the way she did. Pretty girls, however poor the holes of rooms they may have to go home to, have their own faces to love in cracked little green mirrors, and in the curious mirrors of men's eyes. But Louise had not a pretty face that she herself could love. A pretty girl would have wanted the ermine for the decking out it might have been of her

The Ermine Muff and Stole

prettiness, but Louise wanted only to look at it and hold it and pat it, and make believe that it was hers, so beautiful and soft and warm that winter night.

There was a very silent empty dark street. The blank walls on either side of the street enclosed courts and gardens, and there were no windows opening on the street, and the great doors, that were far apart from one another, were all closed. There was no traffic at all in the street. The gas lamps were few, and their thick yellow heavy light travelled from each of them toward the other only a little way along the wet cobbles of the old pavement and along the blank walls. There was no one to see Louise put down the box and take out the muff and the stole and put them on.

If she had been a pretty girl, she would have wanted to wear the ermine muff and stole where people could see her in them, in bright lights and crowds. As it was, she was happy just alone with them.

She was happy for a really quite long time, perhaps an hour, wearing the ermine muff and stole, walking up and down the lifeless street, before she realised what she had done.

The door that had the Prince's arms carved above it was set back in a very deeply recessed great archway, full of shadow. There was a balcony over

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the archway that projected with its carving of masks and garlands quite far over the street, and the shadow was deep under it, where Louise stood to ring the bell of the door.

Not ringing the bell, she stood there in the shadow for some minutes, and knew how dreadful the thing was that she had done. There was no need to go to the lamp and look. She could feel how wet the fur was. The muff was wet where she had been hugging it under her chin, and where her hands had clutched the lining, and the ends of the long ermine stole were wet where they had been dragged in the wet of the stones. There could not possibly be any hiding of the thing that she had done.

Louise stood in the street before the house of the lady of the ermine muff and stole, and knew what she had done, and knew what would come of it. If she had not been such a frightened little mouse of a girl, perhaps she could have managed some lie about an accident, to tell when they questioned her at the shop to-morrow, about having been knocked down by a motor in the street, perhaps. But as she was, she could not have dared it. She could not even have thought it out. She could never plan things or manage things, as pretty girls who were not frightened, could. She could only imagine, helplessly. She stood before the door of the

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Princess, and looked upon the ruin of the ermine muff and stole.

She knew just what life would be like when it was all discovered, and she was dismissed and disgraced, and the old man she lived with, who said he was her father, found it out. She knew just what would happen to her in the hole of a room when she went back there afterwards; she knew that there was in all the world only one way of escape from it. She knew in an instant very much about that one way. As she stood there in the Princess's doorway, Louise knew the way of death, down, quite close, to the edge of it. She really did know, as she stood there, very much about what it would be like to kill oneself. It was an enormous knowledge, and she possessed it, rather completely.

She stood in the Princess's great doorway for very long minutes, and knew as much of death as one can who does not go over the edge. And afterwards things that happened showed it really odd that it should have been so, a really odd coincidence.

After all, she did not throw herself into the river. There was no reason why she did not, except that she could not. Perhaps for many people that is the only reason. Unless one has been extremely near to throwing oneself into the river

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one may not quite know how hopelessly, if one can't, one can't. As the little girl stood there in the Princess's doorway, for minutes that were quite hopeless, she knew rather terribly well what it is not to be able to kill oneself.

There were only a few minutes. Then she threw the ruined furs down under the arch of the great entrance and ran away.

She went back to the hole of a street and the hole of a room where the man who said he was her father let her live as long as she gave him her wages. She waited, all night awake, for the horror of the day. And she went to the shop in the morning, and waited all morning for the horror of what was to happen, and all the afternoon. And nothing happened . . .

Then, that night, when they called the Paris papers through the streets, she knew, as all Paris knew, that Madame the Princess of the great name was dead.

She never knew what became of the muff and stole. As far as that was concerned, then, she had no need whatever to kill herself.

In those dreadful minutes when she had been standing at the door that had the Prince's arms carved above it, something had been happening, it appeared, that had really made the whole thing a very odd coincidence.

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In those same minutes the Princess who had commanded the ermine muff and stole had, it appeared, come nearer to the point of knowing what it is to kill oneself, than the little girl who had worn the ermine muff and stole in the rain, and brought them home all ruined.

It had been worse for the little girl because she had been afraid.

The Princess, it is true, had not been afraid. She had done what Louise had been afraid to do, the only thing to do, indeed, for the ending of their stories. The Princess had put an end to her story, that all Paris had for some time been telling, in the way that Louise had been afraid to take for the ending of her story, a story that nobody knew about. The Princess had taken the way which Louise had been afraid to take, and that was why nothing ever happened to Louise about the ermine muff and stole.

All Paris talked of the death of the Princess, as all Paris had talked of her life. In the beautiful house where she used to buy such beautiful things of silk and lace and velvet and satin and fur, they talked and talked of it. Great people, when they came there to buy things, for days afterwards, spoke of it, to one another, and to the shop people, in a really frightened way. The pretty girls of the shop, who all of them had lovers, could not see why

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the Princess had done it—just for that. They thought she was very stupid.

Louise never spoke of it at all. She listened to the talk of the others and wondered at them. She understood, as they did not understand, any of them. And she felt something very intense and very strange, at once a pity and an envy, that surely nobody else in all Paris quite felt, for the Princess who was to have had the ermine muff and stole, and who had done the thing that she, the girl Louise, had been afraid to do.

The Stairs Up

THERE was a little old stairs to be seen through the always open door of a house the poet used to pass, in a poor, once very proud street, which were so beautiful that always he fancied they must lead up to some quite marvellously beautiful thing.

A cold, damp smell of old stone and wood, that lonely smell of all old houses, came out always to the street from the dark-vaulted, red-tiled vestibule of the house of the stairs.

What once had been the porter's lodge, on the left of the door, was now a cobbler's shop, and the

The Stairs Up

smell of beeswax and of leather was there, with the smell of ages, at the door.

The cobbler kept a lamp almost always burning in his shop, for the street was narrow and the window was low, and the light of the lamp would shine out to the vestibule and on the wine colours of the old brick tiles and of the woodwork.

In the wet Paris winters, the light of the lamp made a golden glow of the damp that there was in the vestibule.

The stairs opposite the door, went up, and turned, and turned, and turned again, leaving a well square to the top of the old, low-built, little house.

The railing and banister of the stairs and the edges of the steps were of dark wood, rubbed and worn and trodden to wine colours, and the steps were of red brick tiles like the pavement of the vestibule. There was a window at the top of the stairs, so that each turn led higher up into light out of the shadows of the turn below.

It was such a beautiful, little, old stairway that it was mysterious and sad—as all beautiful things are sad. It was a stairway to imagine things about, to hear lost footsteps going up and down.

With the smell of the long past and its ghosts, of ages and of story, the always lonely smell of

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places that have been much lived in, there was also the smell of poverty on the stairs.

What the house was, what the stairway led to, the poet was careful never to ask. Not knowing anything about it, he thought it could lead for him and for anyone and everyone to whatever thing most was desired and dreamed of.

The poet was often hungry and often cold, but he had dreams. He was a real poet, who would have starved and frozen to death for his dreams.

The only thing in the world he did not dream of, was that the people did not have dreams, only hunger and cold, whose doors opened to the smell of poverty that there was on the stairs.

The Children's Nurse

THE children's nurse was leaving. The children were so big now that they had to have a Miss. Mimi was five and Ella was seven. They must have someone who would teach them things. Aglaé had been with them too long as it was.

Poor Aglaé, she could neither read nor write. She had been the nounou of Ella. Her husband, a fisherman of some little harbour of the Brittany

The Children's Nurse

coast, had been lost at sea before their child was born. The child had died where she had put it out to nurse. So she had no one. She had stayed on with Ella and then the little Mimi. But now she must go.

The children's mother hated to tell her, but what was there to do? She told her while they were still in the country, at the château, and said that, when they came up to Paris after the New Year, she would help her to find a good place.

She, the children's mother, was really sad to think, when she did think of it, of Aglaé's going away. It would be a tragedy for the children. They adored Aglaé. The children's mother did not know what a tragedy it was for Aglaé until she found the three sous on the mantelshelf. Then—though what on earth had the three sous to do with it?—she suddenly thought of Aglaé as she never had thought of her before. She had been glad to think how quickly the children would forget her, but after the three sous she was, somehow, sorry for that.

She did not have to find another place for Aglaé. Aglaé did not want her to. She said she could never take another place, that she would go back to the little port on the Brittany coast where her child was buried, and the sea could tell her of her man's grave.

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The children's mother thought she must have plenty of money put by, and did not trouble about that. It was only afterwards that her maid told her Aglaé never had saved any money at all, had sent all her wages until the very last to the woman who had taken care of her child when she came to nurse Ella. But then it was too late to do anything about it.

The children's mother and Aglaé both were glad not to tell the children that Aglaé was going away.

The day she was to go—she would be leaving about nine o'clock of the evening—she took the children to the Bois, and when they came back, at supper, they were talking of how she was to take them there again to-morrow.

They had been to the little lake of Longchamps, and the two swans had come sailing up to the bank, quite close, to see them. Aglaé had said they might go there again to-morrow and take bread to feed the swans.

Mimi said she was going to buy cakes for the swans. But Ella said she, for her part, would have to save her cakes from luncheon; she couldn't buy any because she was keeping all her money to get a present for Aglaé.

They were talking about it at supper when their mother came in.

The children's mother could not look at Aglaé

The Children's Nurse

at all. She did not stop with the children that night, but left them, that Aglaé might have them all for herself, to play with and pet and put to bed.

By eight o'clock the children were asleep.

Their mother did not go to see them. She was dining at home that night and alone. She was going afterwards to the Opera, and she dressed early that she might have time to say good-bye to Aglaé. She had her dinner brought to her room, and had finished it by half-past eight. At a quarter before nine she sent for Aglaé.

But Aglaé had gone.

She had gone as soon as the children were asleep, without saying good-bye to anyone.

The children's mother was sad at the Opera. She thought how strangely all music makes one feel as if one were saying good-bye. There was in the opera she heard that night one of the greatest songs of the world of lovers and their saying good-bye. It was absurd that it should make her want to cry because the children's nurse had gone.

Next morning in the children's room she found the three sous on the mantelshelf. Aglaé evidently had taken them out of her purse to have ready for her fare on the top of the omnibus, and had put them there, and forgotten.

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It was nothing, but it made the children's mother want to cry.

The children cried for Aglaé all morning.

In the afternoon the new Miss took them to feed the swans.

Ella still refused to buy cakes, because she would send her present to Aglaé.

The children's mother thought it would be a beautiful idea for them all together to send a really big present to Aglaé.

But it seemed that Aglaé had forgotten to leave any address, and no one knew the name of the little harbour on the Brittany coast.

The Milestone

EVERYWHERE about the castle, with its towers and courts, its moat and drawbridge and ramparts, one felt memories of war, but most intensely, somehow, just there by the Roman milestone.

It was there that the children—the castle children and the porter's children from the lodge in the entrance tower—liked best to play their war games. Nearly all their games were of war, for the little Monsieur was to be a great warrior. Also,

The Milestone

always little Mademoiselle Anne Marie would have the children come to sit on the grass by the milestone when she told them her war stories.

The milestone was a shaft of granite, tall above even the head of big Jean the porter, and so wide around that the other Jean, the porter's son, could barely clasp his arms about it. It was worn and stained by time and weathers to numberless, nameless, lovely colours. There was an inscription that the hundreds of years had not eaten away, of which people who knew could make out that the milestone had been set there, in that place, on the great road across France, by the army conquering Gaul when Caracalla was Emperor in Rome. It stood in the centre of the outer court of the castle. The great road passed through the court. In old days the castle people had had the right to levy toll.

The castle, with the entrance court and the court of honour, was separated from the outer court by the moat and the drawbridge.

The moat was dry now, but Anne Marie used to tell the children how, long ago, it had been full of thick green water, and how it had been a *corvée* of the townpeople to keep the water stirred with long poles all the summer nights through, that the frogs might not sing there to disturb the castle slumbers. Anne Marie was a very grand little

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lady, who would have liked to have people stay awake at nights that she might sleep.

The court of the milestone was squared in by the moat and the trimmed lime trees on the castle side, and by the very beautiful old service houses on north and south, and on the side opposite the castle by a mellow brick wall with a gate that led to the basse-cour, where the white doves lived, and to the potager, with the sweet peas and the sundial.

The Roman road crossed the court from south to north, and on the south was arched over by a tall, ancient tower.

The tower over the Roman road was called the King's Tower, though it was big Jean the porter who lived there.

On either side of the road, where it came through under the tower, there was a dog-kennel. The two great Danes, to whom the kennels belonged, were savage beasts, kept chained all day, and loosed at night to guard the castle. Their names were Olga and Oder. Anne Marie had heard someone speak once of letting loose the "dogs of war," and for a long time, till she was quite a big girl, she thought that meant Olga and Oder.

One night the "dogs of war" got into the basse-cour and killed all the white doves. That frightened Anne Marie. She said it meant that some-

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thing dreadful was going to happen, she did not know what.

After that, for some time, she was afraid of the war stories that she told.

All the stories were about the castle and its people. The castle, with its town crowded close about it, had seen the rise and fall of many wars, and had withstood sieges of its own. It had been fortified against the Normans, and then the kings had taken it from the nobles, and the nobles again from the kings, and Calvinists and Leaguers had held it turn and turn about. Afterwards a certain favourite of the Sun King had tried to make a gay place of it, and could not. Anne Marie loved the stories of that time. The Revolution and Napoleon's wars sent stories crowding to be told. But the time of which Monsieur Armel loved best to hear, was the time it made Anne Marie cry to tell of.

Armel would beg her to tell stories of that time, and when she told them, often crying over them, he would be furious,—but furious, against the enemies of France, that made his sister cry. He would fall into white rages that were rather terrible. He was a delicate little boy, the flame of his life burned too strongly for the fragile vessel it was lit in. He would grow white as porcelain when he

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was angry, and the blue veins in his temples would stand out throbbing.

The porter's boy was of just his age, but much taller and much stronger. When he saw the little master white and trembling like that, with rage against the long-ago enemy, he would grow very quiet. He was rather a silent boy usually, but sometimes then he would talk to the children in a way that made them all listen.

He would say that one day it would come. He said it would surely come, he only hoped it would not come before they were grown up. He would say, "Monsieur Armel and I will stand together in the front of the battle. We will keep always together. Monsieur Armel will lead the battle, but through it all I will be close to him. I will take care of him all the time. Perhaps I may die for him." He would say that very proudly, the porter's boy, who was so big and strong. He would say to Anne Marie, "And you, Mademoiselle, it will be more sad for you, for you must stay here, to take care of my little sisters and the people."

"Oh yes," Anne Marie would cry, standing up straight by the milestone, "I must stay with my people." She would be picturing herself if the enemy came, how she would gather all her people together, there by the milestone, and stand between

The Blue Birds

them and the enemy. She would wear a blue and gold dress, she thought, and do her hair up very high indeed on the top of her head, and have very, very high-heeled slippers, that she might look as tall as possible. She would have no fear at all, in the blue and gold dress; and she would let the enemy take her life to save the lives of the little sisters of Jean.

The Blue Birds

WHEN Simone was seven years old someone gave her a cage of little blue birds. There were five of the birds in the pretty Japanese cage. They were those tiny birds that are called "cordons bleus." They came from some tropical country, and were as blue as the hottest skies of noon and the south. One of them had some red feathers on his breast, like a stain of blood. They sang in the summer, little very sweet songs that Simone delighted in.

It was in summer, in June, that they were given to her.

The friend of her father who gave them to her told her how hot was the country the birds came from, and how delicate they were, and how she

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must be careful of them that they did not take cold when winter came to Calvados and to the draughty great stone pile of the Château de Pont-de-Vire.

Even in summer nights Simone used to wake with agony of grief from dreaming that it was winter, and that the blue birds had got cold and died.

They were the only live things that had ever really been her own. Of course she had always had a pony, one pony or another; but the ponies had never seemed to belong to her. Her father got rid of the one she was fondest of, because it wasn't quite fine enough for his fine stables; and he made her ride the black one she was afraid of, though it threw her again and again. There were various dogs, too, but they all lived in the stables and thought they belonged to the grooms. There was her mother's dog, the white poodle, Pierrot, the only pet allowed in the château. But he hated Simone. She was sure he told her mother tales about her.

Not that there was much to tell, ever. At seven years old, Simone was so sad a little girl already that she was very good. She was too lifeless ever to do anything but the things she was told to do. Her father thought she was stupid, and her mother never thought about her at all, and her governesses

The Blue Birds

found there was no need to pay much attention to her.

Once she had an English Miss who called her "darling," and kissed her good-night, and whom she adored. But her mother found that Miss not bien stylée, and dismissed her after two weeks.

The Miss of the time of the little blue birds was something like the poodle, Pierrot, licking the boots of Simone's mother.

It was wonderful to Simone that she was allowed to keep the blue birds in her room.

Her room was away up among the roofs of the château. To get to it one had to go up stairs that only the servants used, and then part way along a corridor that led only to the servants' rooms. It was a north room, so that all the cold came to it, and it was a big room, so that the fire never at all warmed it.

Simone knew that in winter the blue birds could not possibly live there; but she thought that she would keep them, then, in the corridor at the foot of the stairs, for there they would get something of the warmth of the rest of the château, which was well heated.

When the first cold came she carried the blue birds' cage down to the foot of the stairs and put it on a small table she brought down from her

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room, close behind the curtain that hid the stairs from the other people's corridor.

She was afraid, dreadfully, that Miss would tell her mother about the blue birds being there. But somehow or other Miss didn't. And as Simone always took all the care of the birds herself, and brushed up, always, the seed and sand she couldn't help their throwing about a little, the servants did not tell either.

Through November and one week of December the birds were quite well there at the foot of the stairs.

Simone missed them very much in her room, but she could get away from Miss and go and sit with them on the stairs.

In the nights of great wind, that brought all the fury of the sea into her room, when the carpet lifted along the floor, and the hangings stirred on the walls, and the water in her ewer froze hard, and she shivered in her big bed, she was glad to think of the warmth the blue birds got from the heating of the other people's part of the château. And always, the first thing in the mornings, when the white frost lay in the window rims, she would have the happiness of finding the little blue birds quite well in their cage in the warm corner.

But one day, in the second week of December, her mother came to the stairs of the blue birds.

The Blue Birds

It was her custom from time to time to go up to the servants' rooms and see if something there dared be out of order.

She found the blue birds in the corner at the foot of the stairs.

She was very much annoyed about it.

She said that, if Simone wished to keep the birds, she must keep them in her own room.

She had Miss carry the blue birds up to the room where they could not possibly be kept alive.

Simone had never said anything to her mother before in all her life, but she told her everything then—how the little blue birds had to have warmth, and would die without it; and how she loved them, how she loved them better than anything in the world; and how she could not bear it if they died. She never cried; she did not cry then, in that moment of a despair than which she was to know nothing more terrible, ever, in all her life. She could not cry at all, only stand, very white and trembling all over, and implore her mother, "It is so cold in my room, they will die there, they will die there!"

She kept repeating that, "They will die there."

And they did die there.

It took them days and days to die, and she had to watch them die.

There was only a certain amount of wood per-

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mitted for her room each day, not possibly enough for keeping the fire up at night. Then began for her a time of trying desperately not to waste the wood, to save it up, treasuring every log, that she might have some left at night. She made desperate excuses to Miss for staying in her room and for minding the fire. And in the nights she sat up in bed trying desperately to keep awake to watch it. All the moments that she dared leave the room she spent gathering brushwood in the pines, and driftwood along the sands and stones of the shore. But Miss would not let her bring it into the château. No child of the poorest fisher people knew more terribly the fight for warmth than Simone knew it.

There was one half-hour every afternoon when—if by rare chance there was sunlight—the sunlight came to Simone's room. There would be a small oblong of it under one of the windows. Simone had to invent all sorts of reasons for being in her room just at that half-hour to move the blue birds' cage into the oblong. It was a half-hour in quite the middle of the afternoon, just when Miss wished her to go out. She had a great dread each day that she might have to be out then, and that her birds might miss the sunlight.

And all the time the little blue birds were dying.

After only one night in the cold room they all

The Blue Birds

were drooping little roughened huddled blue balls. One of them was worse than the others, and made a queer little noise all the time, like a tiny cough. He coughed all one day and all one night, and then he was dead. And he was so blue and small. The day he died another was so bad that it could not keep on its bar, and sat dying on the floor of the cage in the corner under the pretty crystal seed basin. It died the day after. And in the night of that day a third little bird died.

Then came milder weather, and the two birds that were left grew better, and seemed quite gay. The one with the red stain on his throat took a bath in the half-hour when there was sunlight.

Simone prayed and prayed that the weather might remain like that. She had always said her prayers, of course, but she had never before really prayed. Now she prayed with all her strength, "Let it stay warm, let it stay warm; please, God, let it stay warm."

It stayed warm for six days and six nights. And there was sunlight for the little birds every afternoon. Simone began to love God.

Then the weather changed in a night, and in the morning the two blue birds were very bad. Simone had been awake all night, sitting most of the time beside the cage. There was no sun that day. One

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of the two birds died before night. Only the one with the red stain was left.

Simone thought that if only she could keep him alive she could bear anything.

She sat up all that night holding him in her hands for warmth.

She thought that if only she could keep awake like that every night and hold him all of the time he might not die.

She dared to sleep only in the morning, in the little time between the maid's lighting of her fire and the coming of Miss to make her get up for lessons.

She actually did manage to get through a whole week like that.

She kept the little blue bird of the red stain alive for a whole week.

Some of the days of that week were so stormy that the wind put out the fire in the chimney. Then Miss would go down and sit in a corner of one of the salons where it was warm.

There were some especially important people stopping that week at the château, and every day Simone had to go down to the salon after tea.

She had to leave the little blue bird and go down to the salon.

The people who had come in from shooting would all be there, in the warm room, by the great fire.

The Little Chairs

Simone hated them, hated them, all of them, because they were warm.

She used to look at her mother and think, "If you would die, if only you would die, then I could bring the little blue bird down here to the warm room, and he might get well and live." She used to look at her mother, and hate her, and wish that she would die. She wished it as she was never to wish for anything, afterwards, in all her life. "Die, die, die," she would think, as she watched her mother at tea by the great fire.

But of course it was not her mother, only the little blue bird, with the red stain on its throat, that died.

The Little Chairs

THE American girl who had married Etienne de Kernac used, in those many bad enough moments when it seemed as if she could not stand it, to look at his mother and wonder if it was possible that she, in any way, felt things.

How could it be possible for one who felt, who felt at all, to go through what the mother of Etienne had gone through, the very sort of thing that she herself was going through now, and never

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have rebelled, and never have complained, and in no way show the mark of it.

She knew that her father-in-law had been an even more brilliant man than his son, and harder, more autocratic, tyrannical; even more neglectful of his wife, her mother-in-law, than Etienne was of her; even more cruel in his demands and in his indifference. Her mother-in-law had lived all the years as she, Marian, was asked to live, shut away, unconsidered, in the solitary old château, to which the master of those days had come even more rarely than did their present master; she had been good to the poor, and seen to it that the great house was kept up as properly as possible with the scant money allowed for it, and that Miss treated the children like the little great people they were; had religion for what comfort it might be to her, and had embroidered all those marvellous coverlets for the beds in the state chambers that were never used.

For a few weeks of every year Etienne's mother had come up to Paris, as Marian came now; had received formally, one evening a week, in the old hôtel near the church of Sainte Clothilde, as was expected of Marian; and had gone out formally, as Marian was supposed to, when others of her very high-placed, small little world as formally received. Marian, being taken about by her in those seasons

The Little Chairs

in town, used to watch her, stately and charming among stately charming people, who had talked of Etienne's father, in his time, just as now they talked of Etienne, and wonder, out of sheer depths of loneliness, how she had stood it, why had she stood it? Or was she just a gracious figure, made up of little gestures and phrases, little formulæ and standards and measurings, content to live by etiquette and detail and tradition, for whom there really had not been anything to stand?

She used to look at her husband's mother when they sat together, morning after morning, in the vast "little salon" at the château, each with her embroidery or some gentle dull book, and wonder, while the ceaseless threatening of the sea came in at the windows, could one have felt, and have endured it?

In their close solitude together the answer to that question came to be of morbid, desperate importance to Marian. If only she could know. It seemed to her that she could bear it if only she knew that the woman who had borne it had suffered as she did, had felt things as she felt them.

She was so good, Etienne's mother—how terribly good she was—but was she good through grief and pain, or was she good because she knew nothing of grief and pain, and so, quite easily and correctly, just went on?

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To know that would have made all the difference of her life to Marian.

She had ceased hoping anything about Etienne; that was all quite hopeless. She had thought he loved her, but he had not loved her. She had thought she could love his home and his people, but she could not. It was all so utterly his. She had thought her children would mean everything to her, and that they did not was very terrible to her. Perhaps that was, for her, the most terrible part of it. When they were babies and quite her own, how she had loved them! She had thought all her life was in them, and happiness. But as they grew bigger they came to have so little need of her. They did not seem to care at all for anything she could give them. They were so unlike her, she could not understand. She watched them from day to day growing more and more unlike her. Sometimes they seemed to be quite stranger children. Sometimes they seemed even to be little enemies, they so perfectly belonged to the life that she almost could not bear. Sometimes she was afraid of them; they, like all the rest of it, were so utterly Etienne's. She wanted terribly to give them happiness, but they did not seem to want it from her; so they gave none to her, and she had ceased hoping for it from them.

And yet she had not ceased to want happiness.

The Little Chairs

She was so young, and she had so long to live. There must be happiness somewhere, and why should she not go to it? Why should she stay on where it was not? Why should she stay on in the life that gave no happiness to her, and made no use of her? The world was so wide.

And then she would turn to Etienne's mother.

Had Etienne's mother ever felt how wide the world was? And how full it was of chances for happiness? Had she known what she lost? And had she stayed on because of some right that there was in it? If she had felt the burden of it, if it had been to her such a burden as it was to Marian, must she not then have had some reason for bearing it, and might not that reason be Marian's reason for bearing it too? Might not her just having borne it, be proof of a reason and a right?

That was what, it seemed to Marian, she must know. More and more, as the endless time passed to no end whatever, everything, as it seemed, came to hinge on it.

She used to look at her mother-in-law as they drove together through the Paris streets,—behind the plump old horses that must always be exercised, taken out and yet must never be given too much work,—to leave cards at stately doorways, watch her write charming little, quite untrue messages on the cards, and mark off the name on

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her list as having been got through, and wonder, till it came to be an obsession, had she ever felt things other than that? Or was that all that life meant to her? Was that the size of it, by her measurings, for her, between two eternities? And was that what it ought to be, always, for every one?

She used to look at her mother-in-law as they walked together in the paths of the château garden, where some few flowers struggled for life against rock and sand and sea wind, and torment herself with wondering.

And she used to look at her wonderingly and most of all when they were together in the room of the little chairs.

That was her mother-in-law's special sitting-room, which opened from her bedroom, in the wide north gallery of the château. Marian went there rarely, and only by special invitation, if perhaps her mother-in-law had a chill or a migraine, or for any reason was obliged to keep to her apartment.

The little brocade-covered chairs, seven of them, stood around in a circle in the centre of the big, quiet, deep-coloured old room. They were beautiful little chairs. They had been the baby chairs of Etienne and his brothers and sisters. Etienne's was the gold and dark green one. The pale blue and silver one had belonged to the sister, who was

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married now, and came back but for brief visits in odd years to the château. The crimson one and the sapphire blue one had belonged to the two younger brothers of Etienne, who were out in the world, in brilliant ways, very far from the château. And the rose and grey one had belonged to the eldest little brother, who died when a child. They all stood together in their empty, formal, quiet circle. And Marian, whose correct, unresponsive, indifferent boy and girl were being well brought up as befitted their importance, used to look across the little empty chairs at the mother of her husband, and wonder.

The courteous, remote, great lady, why did she keep them there, the little chairs? Did she feel—feel—anything when she looked at them? Was it a comfort to her to look at them, and remember baby figures sitting in them? Was it an unceasing pain to see them empty? Was there special meaning for her in the rose and grey chair of the child that had never grown up, that had never outgrown her, that was gone from her, not in life, but in death, whose ways are kinder, more sparing of illusion? Or did she keep them there just because it is rather a custom to leave in their old places the little chairs of the children, who, in life or death, have gone away?

It seemed to Marian that, if only she could

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know what the little chairs meant to the woman at whom she looked across them, she would know something because of which she never need be so desolately alone again.

If only she could know that Etienne's mother, in her stately, formal life, had loved the children to whom the little chairs had belonged, loved them not just correctly, conventionally, but with rapture and with pain; had suffered because the boys were so very like their father, who made her suffer; had longed that the little girls should grow up gentle, and should love her; had broken her heart with caring for them in all those ways that may mean so much happiness,—if only she, Marian, could know that, just that, then, in the life she was going through, as Etienne's mother had gone through it, it seemed to her, she might come to know the thing because of which it was, all of it, worth while.

Across the little chairs she would look at her mother-in-law, invariably charming and gentle and courteous and sweet, and would wonder, and could come to no conclusion.

If it was winter, the fire would be lighted in the room of the little chairs, and the wind would howl in the chimney, and the anger of the sea would be roared in, through the rattling cracks of the windows, from where the waves beat their fury out on the rocks under the castle walls.

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It was then, of all times, that Marian most felt that she must know.

And always by the little chairs she felt that there must be some conclusion, and that there, by them, she was nearest coming to it.

And always when the sadness of winter added to the room's sadness, it seemed to her that she must get, somehow, to it. The sound of the wind and the sea was all an undertone for her deep need of getting to it.

There was one morning when she came unexpected to the room of the little chairs. She had never, in all the five years, gone there without being asked to, but now she did not even send word that she was coming.

It was a very dark morning of January, and the wind and the sea menaced even more savagely than usual, and the smell of the sea was in all the stony old château, strong and salt, and wet and cold.

Etienne had been down for some days at the château; he had to occupy himself about things there sometimes; and they had been bad days; he had spent in them a long accumulation of temper.

Marian, who did not care any more, had looked at his mother and wondered if she cared.

His father had been just like that, the people had dreaded him just as they dreaded Etienne. She knew by many tokens how it had been. Did

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Etienne's mother get a double hurt from his voice and his gestures and his eyes? Or did not she even know? Was it because she was brave that she gave no sign? Was it because she was fine of soul that she endured? Or was it because she had no soul, and did not feel, and so could, just traditionally, insensibly, go on?

At dinner last night, for some small thing, he had turned on Marian with an anger that made the lines in his young face as deep and as ineradicable as the lines in the face of his father's portrait above him on the wall. Had it meant nothing to his mother, Marian wondered?

It meant very little to her, herself, now, only a vague wonder why, when that was all she got out of it, she should keep on with it.

She went to sleep that night a little more wearied than ever by the uselessness of the going on. And the going on seemed more desolate even than usual when she waked to it that morning.

Etienne would have gone back, she knew, in the night train to Paris. She was glad of that.

The maid came and drew the curtains back from the window and let in the wild dark morning. It was with much difficulty that she could light the fire. The wind put it out again and again in the chimney. At last it burned, but badly, and the smoke hung in the dampness of the room, with

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the smell of the sea, and the sounds of the sea and the storm. The maid brought in her bath and arranged things, and brought coffee and rolls, and put the tray on the table by the bed and went away.

Marian sat up in the big, dark bed and looked about the room.

The room seemed as if it had grown strange to her. She wondered what had happened.

Nothing had happened.

But suddenly it seemed to her that she had come to the end. She thought, suddenly, and for no especial reason, that she had come to the end of endurance. It was all curiously vivid like that, as if she had been coming to a place for a long time, and now, there she was, round the turn of the road, upon it.

She saw quite plainly. There was only to go away: what was there to keep her? Not the religion of Etienne's people, nor inheritance of their traditions, nor fear of losing things of their world, nor any dependence on them. Nothing of theirs hindered her. There would be things to be done, of course, but they were things that did not matter. All that mattered had been over when she looked about the room and saw it become strange to her.

She remembered how unhappy she had been in

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that room. She thought that she would never be unhappy there any more.

Other women went away out of their lives because of someone, or of something.

For her there was no one, and it was because of all the things; because suddenly it seemed to her that she never again could sleep in the huge dark bed of tapestry and oak carving. She thought she never again could warm herself at fires of sea-twisted pine branches and driftwood from his desolate beaches. She never could eat his bread again. She could never again see the little red and gold lacquer breakfast tray, or the green dragon cup, or the old silver coffee pot with the ebony handle.

She dressed quickly.

It was a relief to put on her travelling things.

She would go away, it did not matter where.

She looked back at her room as she left it, and already it seemed a place left behind. She seemed to be not seeing it, really, but only remembering it.

She ran along the corridors of the red brick tiles.

The cold and the dark and the wet were already things she was only remembering.

As she passed the door of the nursery passage, she could catch the sound of the children's voices quarrelling in their alien tongue.

Her little French son and daughter, they would not miss her, they would vaguely wonder, when

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they were told that she was gone, if that meant that they need not be taken to the casement-room any more to repeat their English lessons after tea.

She ran on down the north gallery, where the sea and wind sounded like voices grown unfamiliar to her.

She knocked at the door of the room of the little chairs in the north gallery, and opened it, not realising at all that she had done so without waiting for an answer.

The winter morning pressed close upon the windows of the room of the little chairs, and the wind and the sea cried through it, and the fire in the porcelain stove seemed to give no warmth to it.

Etienne's mother was sitting, where she always sat in winter, near the stove.

Her beautiful white hair was carefully arranged as always, even at that early hour. She had the white shawl round her shoulders. As she sat, her back was turned to Marian, and she did not hear her at the door.

Marian stood quite still at the doorway and looked, for there was an odd thing to look at.

Etienne would have laughed, but his wife did not laugh.

The whole thing was there for her to see in one moment's looking, and to make what she could of through the rest of her life.

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So that was how it was. The children who were gone away had been less near, perhaps,—surely they had been less near,—in the real way of things, when really they had been there, brought in by Miss, and left for some formal, studied hour, than they were now, dreamed over, brought close by the dream that perhaps had been a whole life's dream, as life had never brought them.

And the child that was dead was nearer than were the children who had lived and gone away.

Of a sudden the sad old room, that wind and sea cried through, seemed beautiful to Marian, and the woman who sat there alone, where she had stayed through all her life's enduring, had a beautiful right to dreams.

It seemed to Marian that there was nothing for her to do but to draw back noiselessly before the woman by the fire knew that she had seen.

Her mother-in-law must never know that she had seen.

It was so secret and sacred and tragic and funny a thing.

It was that all the little chairs had been moved out of their stiff empty circle in the centre of the room, and brought over to the warmth of the stove, and gathered, all close together, around the chair in which sat the mother of the children who were gone away, all of them.

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The little chairs were drawn together, in the warmth, cosily, as if there were sitting in them little figures that had dragged them up and put them so, close, to listen to a story.

And closest of all of them to the mother's chair, so close that the foot of the child sitting in it would have certainly been kicking against her fine stiff skirts, so close that the hand, reached down to it, would have held the hand of a child sitting in it, was the rose and grey baby chair of the child that had died.

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AMÉDÉE and his mother and Mister Jack, the Englishman, were following a little path through the forest. It was a path outside the park wall, and Amédée did not remember having ever been in it before. It was all yellow-carpeted with the leaves of the beech trees. Amédée shuffled his feet through the leaves and loved to feel them wet and cool against his little bare legs. There were leaves too, always falling softly down into the path against the black stems of the trees. They shone bright gold in the sunshine that they fell through.

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Amédée kept calling his mother's attention to their brightness, and to the brightness of the sky over the tops of the beech trees. It was partly because he loved all that, and partly because he wanted his mother to see that it was yet quite early, and that there was no need to think for ever so long of his having to go home to supper.

His mother walked fast in the path with Amédée and their friend, the Englishman. Yet she had not on walking-boots, only little fine shoes with silver buckles. She had on a hat instead of the scarlet Tam-o'-Shanter. She did not look as if she had meant to come just walking in the forest. She sang when Amédée asked her to, as they went.

She sang whatever he asked her for, as he ran along, sometimes ahead of her and Mister Jack in the path, sometimes beside them, sometimes behind them among the roots of the trees and in the moss. He always asked for the songs her old black mammy she had often told him of, used to sing to her when she had been a little girl, "way down south in Dixey." He especially liked one that began—

"Down de sun am gone, Brudder Wild Goose,
Down along, down along——"

He thought that the "down along, down along" rang exactly like a bell.

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Big, kind, English Mister Jack sang the refrain when Amédée asked him, too—

“Down along, down along——”

and Amédée liked to hear his voice coming in, deep-sounding, behind his mother's voice that was silver-clear.

“You, all the two, go very well together,” said Amédée, in his odd English, back to them over his shoulder.

He kept ahead of them most of the time, hoping that they would always follow without thinking. He would have liked to go on and on and on for ever, like that. He would have liked to go on and on through all the world so, with just the two of them.

“Me also, I go very well together with you, too,” he said, “but—but my father he would not go well with us at all.” He had been going to say “Miss,” but then he had thought in time that that might remind his mother of his supper-hour, and he changed it quickly, and said, “My father.” He went on as fast as he could, talking to Mister Jack, so that they might not notice the change. “You know maman is not the same at all when my father is there. She is more afraid of him even than I am.”

Then for the first time their silence troubled him.

“Maman, why dost thou not talk at all? Thou

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hast not said one word to Mister Jack, not even 'How do you do,' when he met us at the King's Bassin. It was I alone who told him how glad we were to see him." He turned round in the path to explain quite clearly to Mister Jack.

"She is not silent with you in the same way she is silent with my father. This is an altogether different silence. With you it is because she is happy that you are near. How came you to be here, Mister Jack? They said you were gone back to Paris this morning. Are you not going away?"

"Yes, I am going away," said Mister Jack.

"And when you come back again to the château," said Amédée, "you will finish helping me to build my cabane? And when we are in Paris you will take me to see those lions of which you told me? Please, will you not sing more about the Wild Goose?"

"'Pears like you'd follow de Sun, Brudder Wild Goose," sang Amédée's mother.

"Down along, down along,
Dar, whar de edge ob de world am darkenin',
Dar, whar de hush ob de night am harkenin',
Down along, down along——"

Then Amédée ran ahead after a rabbit.

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The path went up steeply for a way through a darker part of the forest, where there were pine trees. And then it came out suddenly to the beet fields, that were stained all red and purple and green and blue. Looking back over the yellow forest Amédée could see the blue roofs and towers of the château. He hoped his mother would not look back.

The path went across the wide fields. One could see far away over the fields to where all the stains of red and purple and green and blue were blurred in together.

The sun was quite low over the edge of the fields. Amédée hoped his mother would not notice that.

There were people working in the fields.

Close to the road they passed a woman picking over a pile of beets. She had a white cap with wings like a bird's, and a dress of the blue that was the blue of all the distances.

Amédée said, "Maman, it is old Lazarette!"

But his mother did not stop to speak with Lazarette.

In a field quite near there were a big brown horse and a man ploughing. The big brown horse and the man's brown clothes were all part of the colour of the upturned earth of the field.

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“Maman, maman, that is the husband of Marthe-Jeanette!”

But his mother did not seem to care.

She had stopped singing, and so had Mister Jack, and neither of them noticed when Amédée asked them to sing.

It was very odd, the way they went on and on. Even if they turned back now they could not possibly reach the château before dark.

Amédée had never been out walking after dark before. He thought it would be wonderful. It was becoming wonderful already. Already there were white mists gathering over the fields.

They came from the beet fields to a field full of tall peaked hayricks. The hayricks were very dark against the low sun, and their dark, peaked shadows reached far out from them upon the stubble.

There was a misty pasture with some sheep in it. The sheep were huddled together, knee-deep in mist.

Everywhere there were quantities of crows. They flew over all the fields, cawing. And they perched on the hayricks and on the backs and heads of the sheep.

Amédée remembered all these things afterwards, because his mother said to Mister Jack suddenly, when she had not been even singing for a quite long way, “We shall have need to remember every-

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thing, everything, of this afternoon, always, all our lives long."

And Mister Jack said, "All our lives long" after her, like the refrain of the Wild Goose song, and with a ring of bells in the way he said it, Amédée thought, somehow, too.

"All our lives long," said Mister Jack, walking beside Amédée's mother in the little path.

"Down along, down along," sang Amédée, ahead of them; "it's like a bell ringing at the end, at quite the end, a tolling, like the 'glas,' you know."

The path had come out into a wide white road.

They turned to the right along the road. The road lay away across the fields, long and straight. At the end one could see a village, grey, shaggy low roofs huddled close around a grey, square church tower.

The mist was deep on the road.

The sun, that had been quite in front of them as they crossed the fields, was beside them now.

It was very big and round and crimson. And the mist, over the fields and along the road, was crimson too.

The sun balanced on the very edge of the world. The edge of the world was black under it. A great black crow flapped up from beside the road across the red sun.

Amédée felt afraid a little, suddenly. He

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dropped back in the road, and slipped in between his mother and Mister Jack, and took a hand of each.

His mother's hand was trembling, and Mister Jack's hand was very cold. It was then that his mother began to say things. She spoke so quickly Amédée could hardly understand her.

She said, "I thought I could do it. Until the last minute, until I was coming out of the door, I thought I could. I thought it was right. I thought it was for us only the taking of our own. I thought that happiness was for us, and that we had a right to take it. That our lives were ours——"

She stopped.

Mister Jack said, "Elinor, Elinor, Elinor!"

Amédée thought it was funny he should say her little name like that, three times over.

She said, "I thought that the dream was coming true. You and I, and the world forgotten. And I came out of the door. And then he was there, coming in with his little wheelbarrow full of yellow leaves he'd been sweeping up——"

"Jean Grotin had let me," said Amédée, "with his broom of brown twigs."

He thought that, if he could only make his mother interested in talking, she might forget his supper-time until they had quite got to the village

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ahead down the misty road. Already there was a light in the window of one of the little houses there.

He said to his mother, "I had found for thee a beautiful piece of yellow fungus, hadn't I? I gave it to thee there at the door, didn't I?"

His mother said to Mister Jack, "Don't you see, oh, don't you see?"

Her voice sounded as if she were begging something of him.

Mister Jack said to Amédée's mother, "I understood, when I saw you coming, there to the Bassin du Roi, not alone."

She said, "I was afraid to come alone. I had to come. I had to see you, this one time. And I was afraid of myself, of what I'd do, of not being able to bear it. Without him here, close, I couldn't have borne it. I could not have borne the going back alone."

"Then it is a good thing I am here," said Amédée.

His mother said, holding his hand very fast, "My baby, my little baby!"

"I'm not really a baby," said Amédée to Mister Jack.

His mother said to Mister Jack, her voice still begging, "He isn't like them at all, and they don't understand. They will punish him for things he

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didn't mean. He gets unhappy, and they wouldn't care. He isn't very strong, and he sometimes is frightened——”

“Never when maman is there,” said Amédée to Mister Jack.

And she said to him again, “Oh, don't you see, don't you see?”

Mister Jack said, “If I did not understand so well, could I walk like this by you, to-night, quietly? Why is it that I have not said one word, not one word? It is not because I do not feel. Feel—feel—oh, Elinor—there is that of me which is mad with it. But there is some other thing of me which understands.”

His voice was different too, somehow. Amédée never would have known it for his voice. It sounded very quiet.

The sun had gone “down along” over the edge of the world. There was come to the world that strange short space between lights, when the light of the day is gone and the lights of the night are not yet come.

There was no more shadow, because it all of it was shadow.

There were more lights now in the village at the end of the road. And the village was so near now that Amédée could tell which of the lights were candle lights and which were fire lights.

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The bells of the church tower began to ring the Ave Maria of sunset.

Amédée's mother said, "Oh, there'll be every day—every day, every day—all life long, to be got through—from morning until evening, from evening until morning——"

"Down along, down along," sang Amédée, with the sunset bells, shuffling his feet through the mist that was on the road, just as he'd shuffled them through the yellow leaves in the beech-tree path, and scarcely more noiselessly.

They came nearer and nearer to the village.

Even though his mother and Mister Jack were not talking, he was not afraid any more of his mother's remembering his supper-time.

They passed more peasants in the road—dark, slow, always bent figures, going home to supper.

Even in the half light Amédée could see that they were not the people his mother and he knew. He wondered what village it was they were coming to. Somehow he did not like to ask. He was sure it was not one of their own villages. That made it all the more wonderful, he thought, to be going there after dark.

It was quite dark when they came to the first houses of the village.

There was a candle in the window of one of the houses; and the door of a house that had no win-

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dow stood open, and there was a red firelight coming out from it.

The houses were all crowded close together upon the narrow, cobbled street.

Then the street opened a little wider, and there was the duck-pond, and the church with the graves about it.

There was a lamp over the door of a house that faced the church across the duck-pond.

The light of the lamp showed a signboard at the door, that had some words on it Amédée could not make out, and a stag's head painted under the words.

When Mister Jack turned to the door under the sign Amédée cried out, "Oh, now we shall have supper!" and took his hands away from his mother's and Mister Jack's to clap them together.

Mister Jack knocked the doe's foot at the door, and a woman, who was old and had a white cap, opened the door.

There was a room with a fire burning in a big black chimney on one side of it, and stairs going up, narrow and steep like a ladder, out of it, opposite the door. There was a wooden table in the middle of the room with a basket of bread and a bottle of wine upon it. It was a very heavy black table, and it had no cover. There was a lamp on it, and the light shone yellow on the black wood.

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Three chairs were drawn up to the table. Under the stairs there was a wood pile upon which were some chickens that had gone to sleep. There was a candle on the stone shelf of the chimney, stuck in its own melted tallow on the stone. Amédée thought it was the most beautiful way to arrange a candle.

The room smelled of earth and stone and trees, almost like out-of-doors.

It was cold in the room, colder than out of doors.

Amédée went to see what there was in a big earthen crock that stood in the far corner. He thought there might be goldfish in it. But instead, there was a lot of linen soaking in water and pressed down by a big stone.

The old woman came to Amédée and said she would make an omelette for him. He went to the fire to watch her make it.

His mother and Mister Jack went and sat at the table a little way off.

Amédée did not notice whether or not they talked. He was so interested in watching the old woman prepare his supper.

She unhooked the marmite from the iron crane on which it hung over the fire, and put it down on the stone hearth, close to the ashes, to keep hot.

There was something good in it, she said, that Amédée was to have for his supper.

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She lifted the lid of the marmite a little and let him see the steam pour out and smell the good soup of lard and cabbage. She fastened the rondin on the chains with the hooks that had held the marmite, and set the poêle into the iron circle.

She fetched two eggs from a basket by the wood pile, and broke them into an earthen bowl and beat them, yellow and white together. Then she put butter into the poêle, and it sizzled and steamed, and she poured the eggs into it.

"Watch how the omelette makes itself," she said to Amédée, and scarcely touched it with the fork.

Amédée watched breathlessly.

She gave him a thick brown plate to hold. Then she took the poêle off the crane again and slipped the omelette from it to Amédée's plate.

She let him carry it himself to the table, and she helped him up on one of the high black chairs, and gave him a spoon to eat with.

She brought him a bowl of soup from the marmite, and told him to dip his bread in it, a thing Miss never would have permitted him to do.

He had never in his life had such a good supper.

Suddenly it grieved him that his mother and Mister Jack were not eating anything.

"Maman, thou didst have no tea," he said.

The old woman had gone out of the room by a door near the stairs and the wood pile. She had

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said something to Mister Jack and Amédée's mother about going to see if her son were yet come back with the cart.

Mister Jack and Amédée's mother were sitting at the other end of the table from Amédée.,

Mister Jack got up and found two glasses somewhere, and poured red wine into them from the bottle on the black table. He made Amédée's mother drink it and eat a piece of bread that he broke for her.

"You are not hungry?" Amédée asked her.

She said to Mister Jack, "I can't realise it at all, that it is the end, the very end. It doesn't seem possible. Never to hope any more."

Mister Jack stood looking at her.

She was sitting with her elbow on the table and her forehead in her hand. Her hand across her forehead shadowed her eyes from the light of the lamp on the table. Her other hand lay on the table, by the glass of wine she had scarcely tasted. Her hand looked very white on the black table. It made Amédée think of a little dead bird he had found once in the percée. That was curious, for the bird had not been a white bird. The light of the lamp shone on the white hand of Amédée's mother, that lay so still on the black table, and on the red of the wine in the glass.

Suddenly she spoke, with her hand covering

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her eyes. "If only he were to stay always my little baby, with a wheelbarrow full of yellow leaves, and a present for me of a broken bit of fungus."

Amédée had loved the yellow fungus very much, because of its queer wet smell and because of its yellowness, so bright against the wet black tree-trunk he had torn it from. He was glad his mother talked about it to Mister Jack.

"But soon he'll be big," she said, "and not need me. He'll want other people, and love them, and not love me much, nor want me much, nor need me at all. And then I shall have nothing, nothing, nothing."

Mister Jack just stood there looking at her.

"I think she is talking about me," Amédée said to him.

Then it was to him, Amédée, that Mister Jack spoke.

"Amédée," he said, across the table, "stay loving her, and wanting her, and needing her, always, won't you?"

"Oh yes," said Amédée, from the depths of his bowl of cabbage soup.

"Promise me, Amédée," said Mister Jack across the black table.

Amédée ran his fingers all around inside the bowl and sucked them. "But, yes," he said, won-

Amédée's Supper

dering why nobody scolded him for his bad manners.

The old woman came back into the room and said to Mister Jack that the cart was at the door ready.

She said, "It will not be very fine for Madame, but it is the best we have. My son has put in it some cushions that the schoolmistress has lent, and he is a good man, and will drive carefully. The little monsieur will enjoy it," she said to Amédée.

Amédée said, "I don't want to go home." He scrambled down from his chair and went to his mother. "Nor dost thou want to go home," he said.

She did not seem to hear him.

The old woman stood for a minute looking at Amédée's mother. Then she turned away and crossed to the hearth and took the candle from the chimney-shelf, and went to the stairs, and began to climb them, lighting her way with the candle, slowly, for she was a little lame.

Amédée ran after her to thank her for his supper.

"It was the nicest supper I have ever had," he said; "I did so much enjoy it."

The old woman went up the stairs with her candle into the shadows.

Mister Jack was bending over Amédée's mother.

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He took up her hand that lay so white on the black table and kissed it. And he took her other hand, that hid her eyes, and kissed it.

Amédée wanted to see the cart they were to be driven home in. He went to the door and opened it.

Outside it was quite, quite night, and very cold. There was a two-wheeled cart with a hood over it waiting at the door. The lantern, hung under it, lighted up the big wheels of the cart and the legs of the rough country horse that was harnessed to it. They were white legs with long fetlocks.

The light that came out from the door Amédée had opened showed the driver standing by the white horse, and several dark figures of people who had come to see what was happening at the inn of the Stag's Head.

"Oh, I do love that!" said Amédée. "What fun to drive home in the cart! Maman, if we have to go, let's go."

His mother came out of the door. She did not speak to anybody. Mister Jack helped her into the cart, and then lifted Amédée up beside her on the high seat, and the driver got in with them.

Amédée thought that the drive home in the peasant's cart through the night would be the best part of it all.

Only, when the driver picked up the reins and

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called to the white horse he realised how sorry he was that Mister Jack was going away; and he leaned out, round the hood of the cart, to wave to him, standing there in the village street in the night, and say, "Good-bye, good-bye. I did have the nicest supper!"

The Secret of Mother and Son

EVERY morning—finished for the time being with baths and douches and piqures and massage—punctually at 11.30, month in, year out, the mother and son met in the reading-room of the Grand Hôtel de l'Etablissement des Bains, this being at Touson-les-Bains in the department of the Vosges.

Those who know Touson-les-Bains—and the knowledge were better not admitted—know that it is there the great doctors of the moment send such of their patients as have lived too hard and too fast, and are come, too soon for their fancy, to the end of things. It is the last hope—if the word can have at all to do with the place—of those who are frightened. And how frightened they are, there at Touson. How they cling to life, with hands, all crooked and shaking, that never will hold

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cigarette or card or wineglass any more. And how quaint is the one look that all their faces have, the look, one might imagine, of drowning people, who clutch at things as they go down.

They are all going down at Touson. The doctors and the bath people and the hotel people help them in their clinging to straws. The dining-room master attends them, with care for medicine bottles and cachet boxes and glass tubes and measuring spoons; and the hall porter, with care for canes and crutches and cushions and wheel chairs; and the housemaid, with care for more pillows and less pillows, and heavy covers and light covers, and windows open and windows shut. They are regaled while they may be, on extract of beef and purée of brown beans, and compôte of prunes and lait caillé, and allowed, as long as it is possible to them, to mingle with one another, for an hour before the second breakfast, on the terrace or in the reading-room. Also they are allowed, blessed privilege, after the second breakfast, two hours of rest in their rooms, and solitude, freedom from piques, massage, bath, and douche.

So it was, through many long seasons, that at 11.30 of the mornings, promptly, Madame la Marquise de Saint Ouen-Trois-Châteaux, and Monsieur le Marquis, her only son, and she a widow—God rest the poor soul she had given no rest to—met

The Secret of Mother and Son

by the newspaper-heaped table in the reading-room.

Tap-tap of her cane down the parquet of the hall from the east corridor; tap-tap, tap-tap of his two canes from the west corridor.

“Good-day, my mother.”

“Good-day, my son.”

All the people in the reading-room would look up. They would raise—from yesterday’s journals at the table, from their variously coroneted newspapers at the writing-desks against the walls, from the books of their various tastes—faces in which there could yet, with the drowning look, be some curiosity.

All her life people had looked up from whatever they were doing, whenever Madame de Saint Ouen appeared. They had stared at her always, because of two possessions of hers, which, of course, took a great deal of staring at, beauty and wickedness. She was beautiful still. Her beautifully shaped old face was so beautifully done that, because of it, one scarcely noticed how beautiful were her silks and muslins and laces. Leaning, she only knew how heavily, with one hand on her cane, she would lift the other hand in its black lace mitt, so gracefully that no one noticed its trembling, and brush it just faintly across the little pointed moustache of monsieur, her son, who was unable

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—each hand being occupied with its stick—to so raise it himself.

All his life, wherever he went, people had looked up also to stare at Gigi de Saint Ouen. They had stared at him always because he was bad. Heaven knows why they stared at him now, when he could not be bad any more, leaning on his two sticks.

“Hast thou slept well, my mother?”

“To a marvel. And hast thou, my son?”

And side by side, with their three canes, laboriously, they would cross the parquet together and go to the seat in the window that has the view of the lake, the best seat in the room, which, of course, was always left vacant for them. Who would have dared usurp the chosen place of Madame de Saint Ouen, the famous and infamous? While the wicked old sick woman got herself into her chair, a task by no means easy of accomplishment, the wicked young sick man would stand before her, most insecurely, between his two canes. She once seated, he would proceed, with great difficulty, to seat himself beside her. And there they would sit, side by side, and talk of their three topics, the weather, their healths, and the management of the hotel.

What other topic of conversation was there that was safe between them? What scandal could they discuss that did not bear resemblance to some

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scandal of one or the other of them? How could he talk to her of poor Madame de Chose, whose husband absolutely refused to be got rid of, for all the purée? or she to him of the loves and the gambling of Monsieur Tel et Tel? No scandal but reflected something from her life or his. And how could either of them know what this name or that might not painfully mean to the other? They would talk of their three topics, and each of them the while would be counting the brown stripes in the wallpaper, from the hall door to the chimney, and from the chimney to the window, from the window to the terrace door, and from that to their own window with the view of the lake, and so on, all round the room, to the hall door again. Also they would count the brown fleur-de-lis in the white stripes that there were between the brown stripes, from the ceiling down to the floor along one stripe, and from the floor up to the ceiling along the next, then down again, and then up again, and so on, all the room round. Madame-his-mother looked at the people occasionally, when the stripes and the fleur-de-lis had been counted times beyond bearing, and noted how this old man appeared each day a little older, and that white young woman each day a shade more white. But Monsieur-her-son could not bring himself to look at the people. When the stripes and the fleur-de-lis failed him,

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he would count the little narrow shining squares of wood in the parquet, a very difficult thing to do when one's head shakes as his did. This for an hour.

Half-past twelve would bring breakfast, and the procession into the dining-room, and never did slower, more halting, sadder pilgrimage wend its way to miracle-working grotto than this, to extract of beef and purée of brown beans and compôte of prunes and lait caillé. Mother and son had, of course, the best table in the room, and at it they would sit together for one hour, talking of extract of beef hot or cold, and purée of brown beans thick or thin, of compôte of prunes with sugar or without, and lait caillé with or without cream.

And all the while they were hating one another. How they hated one another, through their politeness. They hated one another when they met at half-past eleven precisely by the newspaper table in the reading-room, and the hatred increased, augmented, while they conversed so courteously in the best seats by the window with the view of the lake, and at the best table in the dining-room corner. How could it be otherwise, when all their time together, through their conversing on safe topics and counting of stripes and fleur-de-lis and parquet squares, they were looking at one another?

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He looked at her and knew that it was for her past youth he was paying with his youth, now. And she knew how his youth, like this, now she was old, was to her witness of her youth, reproach and insult to her. She looked at him, and he looked at her, and what wonder that the hatred of each for the other was as a red-hot, seething, muttering thing, under the thin layer of their mutual politeness, and that the volume of it increased through their two hours of careful, laborious covering up of it, until, every day, it had almost reached an outbreak by the time the dining-room clock chimed half-past one.

The doctors insist that at half-past one Touson goes to its rooms, has its servants pull down the shutters and quiet its next-door neighbours, and rests for two hours before its baths and doctors and massage and piques begin again. So, from the last sip of camomile tea, mother and son would arise, and would be diverted from some outbreak. They would get out of their chairs, and cross the room, and go along the corridor with the pilgrimage. They would part at the door of the reading-room.

“Good rest, my mother.”

“Good rest, my son.”

Tap-tap, one way; tap-tap, tap-tap, the other

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way. And each would go, she into her room and he into his, to a secret closely guarded. Doors must be locked against maid and valet.

Mother would think—"If my son knew!"

And son would think—"If my mother knew!"

And each, more than ever each day, passionately would hate the other.

The secret of each was to each so vital a thing, that just that it could not be shared by either with the other—that the greatest horror of each was of the other's possibly spying it out, dragging it forth, and laying it bare, and sneering at it—marked for each the distance between them and gave room therein, horribly, for hatred.

Each would have told the maître d'hôtel or the concierge rather than the other.

And it was the hatred of each for the other that, of all the bad things they each of them had in the world, most came between each one of them and the secret—between her and her secret, and between him and his. For each of them, the other turned the secret to a torturing thing, and each made for the other an agony of a thing that should have been beautiful. It was because of her hatred of him that her secret could not help or comfort her. And it was because of his hatred of her that his secret could not help or comfort him. In the hour in the reading-room and the hour in the dining-

To Die a Little

room, it had been all that she could do to keep her shaking old hands, and all that he could do to keep his shaking young hands, from some gesture of hatred. And it was as if hands, full of the impulse of hate, could not have touched on, could not be lifted to, a secret such as was her secret and such as was his.

This is a thing really quite droll, for who wouldn't have been amused to know that the secret of each poor, disreputable, dying, frightened thing was a little dark bound book? His a book of the devotions of Mary, Mother of Christ, hers a book of the devotions of Christ, Son of Mary, to be pored over by each, with twitching head bowed; he before a little blue-and-white valueless plaster image of the Mother of Seven Sorrows; she before a little, not at all fine print, coloured in crude colours, like the prints one's maid's priest gives her, of the Son of the Sacred Heart.

To Die a Little

MARIE ELLA sat up in her narrow, rose and white, little girl's bed, and pushed her hair back out of her eyes.

She saw all the dear familiar detail of the room,

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shadowless and colourless in the dawn light,—and knew that never, never, never would she wake in this room again, that never, never, never would the old, poor, lovely château any more be her home, or its life her life, or the sweet country of grain and vine her country, or herself the careless, happy little Marie Ella that had been.

For this day she was to be married.

The dawn light was clear, with its pure, still clearness in her room. She had had the blinds left open that the dawn might wake her. Sitting up in bed she could see everything,—the roses of the dim ancient linen that hung the walls, the carved rose garlands of the chairs and dressing-table and armoire, and the roses that many-times-great-aunt Marie Ella had her arms full of, in the portrait over the chimney. The dawn light allowed no colour to the roses of the walls, or of that other Marie Ella's charming armful, showed them only dark and dimly outlined.

But the room was full of the fragrance of roses.

And the fragrance took on colour, was itself rose and gold and cream and saffron and deep red.

It gave pain to the heart of Marie Ella.

The man she was to marry to-day had sent her yesterday the wonderful, long-stemmed, heavy-headed roses that filled every vase and bowl in the room.

To Die a Little

They were wonderful roses, he must have had all Paris searched for them, with their infinite variety of colour and of fragrance.

But they seemed to her alien and hostile in the room.

It was autumn, and there were no roses on the terrace under the windows of Marie Ella's room.

From the wide open windows, came to her and to the fragrance of Amaury's hothouse roses, the wild, free autumn odour of the country, of ripe, golden, sunburned grain-fields, with the night shadows yet blue and wet upon them, and of ripe red and purple vineyards, dewy, the grapes crushed a little where they were fallen, heavy with their ripeness, giving the air a taste of wine. There was the smoke of smouldering fires from the huts of the charcoal burners in the fringe of woods; and there was the smell of the woods with it, of their half-wet, half-sunny leaves and stems and chestnut tassels. There was even some just guessed at smell of the farm, of stacked hay and the cows, and of the wet cabbages of the kitchen garden. It all meant to her a nostalgia that she was to take away with her from this day of her marriage, and to keep, an ache and a longing, close with her, all along the years.

The fragrance of Amaury's hothouse roses was

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strange to her, and frightened her, in this waking for the last time to intimate, old, dear things.

She and Amaury would come back. Of course they would come back, occasionally, for visits. They would be given the guest rooms in the south wing, the "new apartment" that was so old. She would be a visitor in the house that had been her home. Her father would tell her that she must always order whichever horse she chose, saddled and up from the stables, and that the motor was quite at her disposition. Her mother would ask, did she mind breakfasting at noon, and should she care to have the St. Hugons invited over to tea. She must never any more tease old Pierre, the butler; and old Madame Pierre of the linen room would never scold her again. She would be asked to visit the village school, and the children would be shy before her. She might go of course to see the village people,—but not to beg to be let stop to supper, and stir the marmite, and cut the black loaf. She would have to walk quietly in the village street instead of running, and in the château she would be a courteous guest, not naughty little Marie Ella any more. She would be always homesick for the house that was no more hers, and most of all homesick for it when she was in it, come back to it sometimes, for short times.

And by and by, when all this, that had always

To Die a Little

been so utterly hers, should have passed to her brother Louis, she would no more come back at all. Amaury would not allow her to recognise in any way Louis' wife, whose great wealth made the whole thing sordid and ugly.

Louis' noisy, smart wife would have this for her home, and would care nothing for it. She would come to it as rarely as she could, and then only to fill it with noisy, smart people, who would never feel its loveliness, or have thought for the memories it held, its long tradition, the stories it was so full of, never would take its offering of poetry and dreams.

Louis' wife would leave the old place all forsaken: and it would be most forsaken when she was living in it, and not caring.

But perhaps Louis' little daughter, when she came driving of a twilight from St. Hugon en Haut, or from the Vieux Moulins, or the Pools of the Dranse, and saw the gates, and the avenue between the poplars, and the old, grey stone steps and the old, red brick doorway at the end, and the window of the swallows' nests over the door, and the grey roofs where moss was yellow and green, would say to herself,—as Marie Ella, whom she did not know, had used to say,—rapturously, "I'm coming home."

Perhaps she would say, as rapturously as always

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Marie Ella had used to say it, "I am at home," in the hall of the worn-out rugs and beautiful, dark shining floor, the stained, dim old walls, and the green knight tapestry.

Perhaps to her, as to Marie Ella, the smell of grain-fields and vineyards in the château, with the smell of the old cupboards and waxed floors, might mean home,—to her, whom Marie Ella hated to think of there. And she might love it, as Marie Ella had loved it. It might be the one home of her life to her.

And she too would have to leave it; would have also to wake, after years, one day, to a wedding morning in this room, and to the little dying of good-bye.

The Bird in the Heart

THERE was a quiet, white, almost empty little room that Theresa,—Tessa, Sister Marie Ange always called her,—was to look back to from all along in her life afterwards. She was to stop and turn to it often; standing still, as it were, wherever in the way of her life she happened to be, and see it always as a secret, quite sacred place, wherein was something for her that she might not speak of, the less, for the more it meant to her. It

The Bird in the Heart

was to seem to her always that she opened the door of the little white room to a most treasured thing, and looked, and closed the door quietly again, in the way of her life, and went on. When people questioned her,—of course, because of the pearls they questioned her closely,—she had nothing to tell of it. And when, as she grew older, various things made her understand how odd an episode the white room might have been in the life of a little girl, its being so sacred had nothing to do with the question of who Sister Marie Ange was, and of how she came there.

The white room was always sweet with garden smells, and had the murmur of the distant sea in it, and was very softly lighted, either by the gold of sunshine that filtered in all day through the closed jalousies and made a floating ladder down the dusk, or by the gold of the lamp that in its turn was placed on the table behind the top of the bed, under the big black crucifix.

There were several people who came and went in and out of the room, and there was always Sister Marie Ange. In the worst of the fever, Tessa always knew her and wanted her. For a long time, everything was pain and confusion, except the presence of Sister Marie Ange. Then gradually the little white room came to be a safe place, from which all fear and trouble were shut

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out, wherein one rested; and the people who came and went—the doctor, who had had her, Tessa, brought to the convent when she had fallen ill in the big hotel down on the promenade in the town, the Mother Superior, with her calm face framed in bands of black and white, and her gold crucifix on her breast, the Sisters who came to help,—all grew dear, and Sister Marie Ange was more dear than all the world.

Aunt Agnes and Cousin Agnes came up to the convent to see Tessa several times before they went away. Afterwards she realised that they had been awfully good to stay on in the town down by the sea, under the convent hill, so long after the season was over, waiting until she was out of danger, and even longer than that, until she was quite getting well. Of course, then, they absolutely had had to go to Paris, because Cousin Agnes simply hadn't a rag, and Aunt Agnes must get in her month at Carlsbad before they all went back in August to America.

Tessa said good-bye to them very nicely. They had come to seem to her like quite strange people, who had nothing whatever to do with her and Sister Marie Ange. And when they talked of how she was to be brought to join them as soon as she was well enough, to Paris or to Carlsbad, she listened without interest.

The Bird in the Heart

She had lived all her thirteen years with Aunt Agnes and Cousin Agnes, her nearer people were dead since before she could remember, but they had never been to her what Sister Marie Ange had come to be in the few weeks; and the places where she had lived with them had meant to her nothing, ever, of what the little white room had come to mean.

There was a time, after they had gone, that was perfectly happy. All day Sister Marie Ange was there, in the room's special gathering of dusk and coolness and fragrance and gentle sounds. The chapel bells rang for the offices. The voices of the nuns drifted up at certain hours, with the fragrance of their flowers that they tended, from the garden. The murmur of the sea was deep and near sometimes, and sometimes one could scarcely hear it. The nightingales sang at dawn and at dusk in the garden, and the frogs sang, and the grasshoppers, and the bees. When Tessa slept, Sister Marie Ange would be sitting close beside her, in her white dress, against the white wall; and when she waked, Sister Marie Ange would lift the pillows and bring her cool milk to drink and sit by her and sing to her very softly in some language that Tessa, used though she was to many tongues, did not know. At twilight, Sister Marie Ange would open the jalousies, and Tessa from the bed

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could see the gold cross on the chapel gable, over the garden, and the three cypress trees and the eastern sky where night would be deepening, and the soft outline of the farther hills. When the lamp was lighted, the shadow of Sister Marie Ange, tall and slight as she was, would move with her, noiseless, like her, about the room, all black, as Sister Marie Ange was all white. And when Tessa waked in the nights, the silent nights, she would have only to whisper, "I want you," and always Sister Marie Ange would be there.

Tessa waked always when the birds stirred in the dawn, and always Sister Marie Ange was awake too, and at the window in the strange dawn light.

It was a long, narrow, deep-recessed window, like all in the convent, full of climbing roses, and of the east.

One morning, something in the attitude of Sister Marie Ange as she stood there, her face, that Tessa saw in profile, lifted to the dawn light, frightened the little girl, who waked to see her so, in a way she couldn't possibly have explained. It was as if she got a quick stab of pain from some pain she never had dreamed of, that was the pain of Sister Marie Ange.

The face of Sister Marie Ange was haggard and hard with pain, with no gentle sorrow, no sadness

The Bird in the Heart

of calm, holy places, no grief that had been blessed to her, but a wild pain, a pain that could never know rest, that could never bear sympathy or know comforting. Her white dress,—like the dress of the novices, though she was not young as they were,—her white veil, pinned back, the white bands of the cornette about her face, seemed all so much to belong to peace, to the white walls and the roses at the window and the chapel cross against the dawn, that the pain her face told, that her very way of standing there told, frightened Tessa the more in contrast.

She sat up among the pillows, and the Sister heard even the little sound she made, and turned to her.

She turned with a movement quick and violent, and stood a moment so. It was as if she were come back from a long way off; she seemed to be trying to realise where she was and what she must do. It was as if she were trying to make herself Sister Marie Ange again, when she had been someone else. It was only for a moment.

Then she said, "Good morning, little girl," in the English she always used with Tessa. "You did sleep well?"

"But you," said Tessa, "you have not slept at all. Oh, what is it, Sister Marie Ange?"

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The Sister did not come to her, but still stood there.

The little girl, huddled among the pillows, felt the distance of the narrow room between them as though it had been world-wide. All her love for the woman who had been to her what no one else in her small life had ever been, all the love that she never before had given to anyone, cried out across the distance.

"Sister Marie Ange, it is terrible, I cannot bear it. You are so far away. Come near, I am frightened, and I want you near."

The Sister came to her.

"Frightened? But why, my Tessa?"

She moved and spoke as if with an effort. It seemed difficult for her to come near. She stood tall by the bed, not bending over it.

Tessa caught her hands that were quite cold, and looked up at her.

The eyes of Marie Ange were dark as if with a shadow of something that was in her heart, something that was black, and that beat itself about in her heart, like a caged, wild bird.

"Of what are you afraid?" asked Sister Marie Ange.

"I am afraid of that which hurts you," Tessa said. "Oh, Sister Marie Ange, what is it? I did not know there were things that hurt one like that.

The Bird in the Heart

I am afraid, because of the thing in your eyes. I am afraid of it for you. It is so black and wild. And it cannot get away. Sister Marie Ange, what is it?"

"Hush, dear, hush," said the Sister, trying to draw her hands away from Tessa's, "there is nothing."

"Sister Marie Ange, there is something that you cannot bear."

The Sister said, "You fancy things, my Tessa. In the dawn light you saw that your Sister Marie Ange was not beautiful, as you had thought her, not young, and without the loveliness you had imagined in her face. Silly little Tessa, there—there." She put Tessa's hands away and stood not touching her, or looking at her.

She did not seem to hear Tessa begging, "What is it, oh what is it, Sister Marie Ange? Tell me what it is that makes you be like that. I love you so. And I thought that you were happy, and you are not; and I thought that I was happy, but I am not; for I have no one but you, no one, and they will take me away from you. And I shall never see you again. And the thing is so terrible in your eyes. And you will die. I know you will die."

Sister Marie Ange did not try to comfort her at all. She turned and sat down in a chair that there

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was by the bed, and leaned sideways against the wall and shut her eyes. Her face was very white and worn, and had no youth at all in it. She did not speak to Tessa, and for some reason Tessa did not speak any more to her. They stayed like that quite a long time.

After a while Sister Marie Ange spoke to Tessa, still not looking at her, leaning against the wall like that, with her eyes shut.

“My Tessa, all the people who have ever loved me I have made unhappy; make me think that it is not so with you. Leave me to think, always, afterwards, remembering, that you were happier because of me. I ought not to let you love me, but I want you to love me. If ever again I make you unhappy, as I did to-day, forgive me, Tessa; and never ask me questions, and never try to understand, and oh, my Tessa, let us not think of sad things any more.”

And they had put all unhappiness away from them, as much as ever it can be put away.

They may pretend that there was no world at all outside the white room, that there would be no going away for either of them from it, ever. And the first day Tessa was carried out into the garden, it was only a beautiful opening wider of white walls.

The Bird in the Heart

The convent walls were covered with rose vines, as red as coral, from which the roses had long fallen, for June was passed, and it was very hot along the azure coast.

The nuns kept their garden watered from the well in the middle of it, and shaded it where they could, with bamboo screens and awnings, so that there were always some flowers, and the grass was green and sweet.

They put a chair for Tessa in the shade of the high, vine-covered wall. She was the only little girl in the convent then, for it was the season when the pensionnaires were all away.

The widened world let in all sorts of colours, the many different greens of grass and shrubbery and trees, the darkness of the cypresses against the many differing blues and purples of the sky, the deep old chrome and umber of the convent buildings, and dim, lichen-stained rust of their tiles, the scarlet and yellow of begonias round the well; and many lights and shadows, always changing, on walls and grass and paths; the little life of bird and butterfly and lizard and cigale, the little stir of them in their places, the little sounds of them; and the sound of the far-off sea one had no glimpse of, and the sound of the chapel bells, in their times, and of the town's bells, following the convent bells.

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The nuns spent a great part of their lives in the garden, they of the black veils and they of the white veils, at their quiet labour of tending it, watering it from the great copper jars, weeding it, clipping its borders, training its vines and fruit trees; pacing its paths, faces wrapt in meditation, heads bent over books of devotion; hastening across it to the chapel, lingering their few spare moments in it, bringing their endless needlework out to it.

Tessa loved to watch them, as her walled-in world included them. She loved the little young white ones, the novices, whose dress was like that of Sister Marie Ange.

Among the white ones there were some who did not belong to the convent, who were not nuns at all, older women, most of them women from the world outside, who came there to "retreat," to find a place of refuge for as long as they would, or as long as they might, from some life out beyond; and to gain there, in the convent's age-long accumulation of both, something of peace and strength to take back to the world with them. They were the Sisters to whom was usually given the nursing of the sick, and, though Tessa never asked, she took it for granted that Sister Marie Ange was one of them.

And yet Sister Marie Ange seemed curiously apart from them, and different from them. Even

The Bird in the Heart

Tessa saw that her place in the convent was unlike anyone else's. In a way, she had more privileges than any of the others, and yet, in a way, her place among them was of the most lowly. She did rough work, now that there was little to be done for Tessa, with the lay Sisters, serving at table, mending the linen, cleaning the copper and earthen vessels of the kitchens. And yet she seemed to be exempt from many of the strictest rules. She took less part than any of the others in the offices, often stayed unreprieved in the garden when the others trooped into the chapel, and never talked as the others did of religion, or was ordered to do so, as any of the others would have been.

Yet she seemed to belong to the convent far more intensely than any other of them all, and Tessa could not have told what it was that made her wonder. Only afterwards, looking back, she knew that she had felt it about Sister Marie Ange, that the quiet and security and apartness of the convent meant more to her than it did to any of the others. In a way, one couldn't imagine her outside in the world that the others in retreat would go back to; and yet, again in a way, she belonged less than any of them to the convent's restraint. That something of wild restlessness and rebellion which there was about her,—that the

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little girl felt then, even, and was to know, for what it was, afterwards,—made it impossible for one to think of her belonging within walls. Sometimes, among the nuns, she seemed utterly alien, and there was something of impatience, even of scorn, even of hatred, in her look at them. She seemed to be afraid of the chapel that the others entered so easily. And yet, when the sound of the nuns' sweet, strange chanting came to her from it, out to the garden, her face would light as Tessa never saw their faces light, as if with reflection of a glory greater than they knew.

Tessa loved the dim little chapel, fragrant of ages of incense and candle burning, of old crumbling stone and damp and rust and prayers and dust. In the chapel there was perpetual exposition of the Sacrament, and there was always a Sister of the Contemplation kneeling behind the grating at vigil. Tessa thought that it would be a most wonderful thing to be one of the Sisters who might do that, stay so near.

She asked Sister Marie Ange once, "Is it not beautiful?"

And Sister Marie Ange said, as if she were speaking to some grown-up person, "Perhaps, for those who can feel it so." And a strange mingling of contempt and envy was in her voice as she said it.

The Bird in the Heart

"One could not do it, could one," asked Tessa, "if one had the black wild bird in one's heart?"

It was the first time she spoke of the black bird to Sister Marie Ange. She spoke of it then, because the shadow had come suddenly dark to the eyes of Sister Marie Ange, looking at the nun of the Contemplation. The shadow was in the eyes of Sister Marie Ange, as she turned then to Tessa, and somehow Tessa felt that Sister Marie Ange, looking down at her, was glad she knew about the black bird.

For a minute they two looked at one another, the woman who was sad in knowledge of life, and the little girl who was sad in ignorance. And Tessa knew that Sister Marie Ange and she would always have between them, after that, the secret of the black bird.

Sister Marie Ange did not speak of it then. "Poor Tessa," she only said, and Tessa then did not know why.

Of the many things she puzzled over afterwards, there was one that seemed most strange.

It was one afternoon, when she and Sister Marie Ange were sitting in the garden. The Mother Superior came in haste and whispered something to Sister Marie Ange. And Sister Marie Ange rose and went away, quickly, as if to escape, before there came out into the garden a most beautiful

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and gracious lady, whom all the Sisters hastened to honour, of course, first because she was good,—as the Mother Superior beautifully told them,—but also because she was a queen.

When people afterwards questioned Tessa about the Queen's speaking to her, the little foreigner who had been so ill, she never could remember clearly, as she would have wanted to, for all the time she had been troubled, and anxious to get away and run and follow Sister Marie Ange.

As soon as she could, she went to find her, and found her in the little white room, standing up in the centre of it, as though she had been pacing its small length up and down. The black beating was in her eyes. And Tessa did not know what better to do for her than to pretend that she herself was tired and wanted to be sung to sleep.

There was always a curious reserve between the two, that kept them closer together than any confidence could have done. Of course it was forbidden the Sisters ever to speak of themselves, but the silence of Sister Marie Ange was not a ruled and ordered silence. It was a silence more intense than that. Because of it, Tessa said nothing to Sister Marie Ange of the Queen's visit. And, because of it, she never asked her, even, what was the language in which she sang.

The Bird in the Heart

But one day Sister Marie Ange did speak to her of the black bird.

In the long, narrow, dark old stone refectory, that was, after the chapel, the oldest part of the convent, all the nuns would gather at meal times to eat their very scanty fare, while the voice of the reader droned on, in gentle, sweet monotone, over the lives of the saints. The Mother Superior sat at the top of the long, narrow, wooden table, and Tessa, by special permission, because she was the only pensionnaire, sat by her, under the carved balcony of the reader.

Sister Marie Ange always helped the lay Sisters to serve the nuns, setting before them their rough bowls of broth and herbs, their long coarse loaves of bread, and their water and country wine.

One day, at the noon meal, an odd thing happened.

It was a day of storm. There had been great heat, and thunder in the air for days, and lightning, and the sound of the sea had been very loud and near. Since half-way through the last night, there had been a breaking of wave after wave of storm, a sweeping up and over of wind and rain, receding only to gather and break again. Tessa knew that all through the storm's raging, Sister Marie Ange had stood at the open, wild window.

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She was there when day came to the world that was rent and shaken. At noon it was more quiet, but the nuns were yet frightened, and huddled together in the refectory.

All the morning, in the fury of the storm, Sister Marie Ange had stayed in the garden, walking fast, so fast, up and down, up and down. The Mother Superior had sent for her, but she would not come in, and at last had gone herself to her, out in all the rain.

The nuns all knew.

Sister Marie Ange had come in with the Mother.

At noon in the refectory her eyes were black as Tessa never before had seen them.

There was a huge, dark, old wooden crucifix on the refectory wall. The nuns always bowed their heads as they passed before it. Often Sister Marie Ange forgot to bow her head and the Mother Superior would reprove her, but not as severely as she would have reproved any of the others.

This day, Sister Marie Ange, passing with a great two-lipped copper jar of water, forgot to bow her head. And this day the Mother Superior spoke to her as she never had before, as Tessa never had imagined she could speak to anyone.

The Mother stood up, the lectrice stopped her reading, the nuns sat breathless. The Mother stood,

The Bird in the Heart

rigid with anger, pointing before them all at Sister Marie Ange.

"Shame to you, Sister Marie Ange," she cried, "shame to you that you forget your Sovereign Lord in your wild mood, shame to you for your lawless, rebellious spirit that you do not control, the evil spirit of your pride that makes you forget. Go kneel there before the cross, and bow your head upon the ground, and remain so on your knees in all abasement, with your lips on the stones at your Lord's feet, until there may come to you such humbling and submission that you forget Him not again."

Sister Marie Ange looked at the Mother for an instant, as though she did not understand. For an instant she stood amazed. And then it was as if a great fury possessed her. An empress of olden times with death at her command could not have been more splendid and dreadful in anger. It was for only an instant, and then it all changed suddenly.

"Yes, my Mother," she answered, and she put down the water jar, and turned to the cross and knelt, and bowed her head down so that her forehead and her lips touched the stones.

The Mother sat down in her place again, the voice of the reader droned on, the nuns ate their

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broth and bread. And through all the meal, not once moving, Sister Marie Ange remained so, humiliating herself before them all as they sat at the refectory table.

Tessa could not bear it. She stood up in her place at the table, and said, "My Mother, permit that I kneel also."

"No," said the Mother, "keep your seat, my child."

But when the nuns had gone out, passing Sister Marie Ange as she knelt, their skirts brushing her face in the narrow space between the table and the wall, the Mother let Tessa delay a moment to go and kneel by her before the crucifix.

Sister Marie Ange did not move.

Tessa begged to be allowed to stay with her, there, on the stones, but the Mother made her come away.

It was dreadful to her all the afternoon to think of Sister Marie Ange kneeling there.

Yet, when she came to Tessa hours after in the white room, there was still in her face the light that had come to it when she had turned to the cross.

"It is quiet in your heart," said Tessa, and added, "the black bird, you know."

"Poor little Tessa," said the sister, as she had said it before.

The Bird in the Heart

"Why do you say that?" asked Tessa. "Why do you say 'poor' of me?"

"Because of the black bird," said Sister Marie Ange, "because you too have it in your heart."

Her face was all illumined; it made Tessa think of something she had read somewhere, or heard, about alabaster and a lamp. She seemed to be standing far apart from Tessa, yet loving her very closely.

"It is so strange a birthright," she said, "the black bird in one's heart."

Tessa said, "And people who have not it, they are quite different. I have no one who has it but you, Sister Marie Ange."

"And I have no one who has it but you, my Tessa."

Tessa was thinking, in utter desolation, "And they will take me away from you." But she did not speak. She did not want to bring the shadow back to the eyes of Sister Marie Ange.

The life of the convent went through days of summer. Some god worked great miracles in the garden, and some god was worshipped in the chapel, with many mysteries.

It seemed to Tessa that there could be no life, ever, anywhere, for her, other than this. But she grew stronger.

When the time came near that she must go, the

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sense of going was upon her terribly; each hour was a cruel loss, and each moment. There would be the last luncheon in the refectory, the last sunset in the garden, the last twilight in the white room, the last bowl of bread and milk for supper, the last lighting of the lamp on the table by the bed, and the last putting out of it to the darkness of the last night. Only so many more days to wake to the odour of heliotrope and petunias in the garden. There would be the last breakfast. Then all the dear familiar things of the room would be there, and she would be gone.

Poor little Tessa, she did not speak of it, she only suffered, utterly, as the time came near for the end, the very end, of it. She kept up very bravely. And Sister Marie Ange spoke no more than she did of the last time that was drawing near.

Only the last night, coming with Sister Marie Ange into the white room, Tessa stood, as the door closed after them, and cried out, "I can't bear it—I can't—I can't!"

She did not touch Sister Marie Ange; she just stood with her hands clenched, and said, "I will not bear it, I will not go! I will die, but I will not go away from you. I will not, for anything but death, go away from you."

The August sunset was like melting, pouring,

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red-hot bronze upon the world all outside the white room. Inside there was dimness and coolness in the shade of the green jalousies. The grasshoppers had not stopped their sounding of brass.

Sister Marie Ange sat down on the edge of the little white bed, and drew Tessa down beside her. It was the whitest little bed in all the world under the black crucifix. It seemed to Tessa impossible that she was never to sleep in the little white bed, after to-night, again.

“My Tessa,” said the Sister, “now I will tell you a thing. It is that neither can I stay here any longer.” Her voice was very sad, sadder than anything Tessa had ever heard, than any sound of music or of waves or of wind in the trees. “I also must go away. I also have a life I must go back to. And I also am most unhappy to go back. Tessa, you are not any more unhappy than I am to go away. You are a little child, and I am quite, quite old, and in our lives there is no likeness at all; but we have something that has made us mean very much each to the other, and that even if we never see one another again, will make us mean much, each to the other, always. My Tessa,” she said, with the shadow in her eyes, “in your heart that is young and in mine that is not young any more, there is the same capacity for sorrow. We were born each of us with the black bird in

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the heart. We shall both of us always be lonely. It is for that that we have meant so much to one another, and been so close together. And, Tessa, it is that that will keep us always close together—close together in a way you will afterwards come, when you are older, to understand—even though we never see one another again.”

Her last words were all that stood clear to Tessa then. Afterwards she understood the rest, but then she could only feel, “Though we never see one another again.” “Oh,” she besought, “must it be that I am never to see you again?”

Sister Marie Ange said, very strangely, “Those who see me can never come near to me, Tessa. No one, ever, of those who see me in my life comes near to me. It is only to one away from me I can be near.”

“I may never come to where you live, Sister Marie Ange?”

“If you came, you would but feel yourself farther away from me.”

“Sister Marie Ange, I do not understand.”

“My Tessa,” said the Sister, “understand this. The circumstance of my life keeps all that I love from me, and leaves me quite alone——” As it had been often before, she seemed to be speaking to someone older than Tessa, and she spoke with the intensity of one who has rarely spoken of her-

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self. "The circumstance of my life is cruel——" She said it, not as if alone to Tessa, but to all the world and to whatever God there was. "The circumstance of my life is cruel——" She stopped, and went on again more quietly, "Perhaps any life is like that," she said, "to one who has the black bird in the heart." She changed again and said to Tessa, "My poor little one, it is so sad that you too should have the black bird in your heart."

"I am glad I have what you have," said Tessa, "even if it hurts."

"My Tessa," said the Sister, "because of you, I shall never in my life be so lonely again, never quite so lonely any more. And that is what I want for you, that perhaps you, in your life, will be less lonely because of me."

"You will not even tell me where you go to, away from here?" said Tessa, that being still the thing she most felt in the strangeness.

"I cannot," said Sister Marie Ange.

"It is a sad place where you live?" asked Tessa.

"It is a gay and brilliant place; I think all gay and brilliant places are sad to one who has the black bird in the heart."

Tessa said, "Do people there not know of the black bird? Do they not see it, as I do, when it comes to your eyes?"

"I have to hold my head so very high there,"

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said Sister Marie Ange, "that no one, even if there were one who understood, could see." Then she said, "Tessa, you remember that day in the refectory when I forgot to bow my head as I passed the cross? The day of the storm, that meant to me all things of rage and flight? And the Mother made me kneel before the cross? I was so happy as I knelt there. I kissed not only the stones, but the hems of the nuns' skirts that brushed past me. I was laid so low. I was so proud to be laid, like that, quite low; the bird in my heart, against the stones, folded its wings and was still."

"Sister Marie Ange, why, why is it all so sad?"

Sister Marie Ange said, "My Tessa, you will not be sadder for the having known me?"

"Oh, so much happier," cried Tessa, "all my life I shall be happier because of you, even if I never see you again. And what is sad of it is better than any joy. I would rather have sadness with you than joy with all the world else." She did not cry at all. Because it would have hurt Sister Marie Ange, she would not cry. She uttered the great dread, that had been all the time in her heart, without crying over it at all. "Sister Marie Ange, suppose anything ever happened to you? Suppose you were ill, or—or—oh, Sister Marie Ange, and I should never know."

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"You will know," said Sister Marie Ange.

Then she said a very puzzling thing. She said, "Some day all the world will know of the death of a woman who had a black bird in her heart, but you will be the only one who ever knew of the black bird. It will be a swift death—I don't know how I know, but I do know—and all people will say it was cruel. But you will know that it was merciful. And then you will understand many things. And I want you to know, my Tessa, that the woman who had the black bird in her heart always loved you, even to the end, and that perhaps the dead are nearer to us than the living, and perhaps the dead can love more perfectly."

Tessa could not speak for fear of sobbing, and they sat silent together, as they had so often sat, in the white room.

After a while it came to the hour of the Angelus. Sister Marie Ange opened the jalousies. The bells were ringing, the nuns fluttered across the garden to the chapel through the dusk. Stars came out over the curve of the mountains. Sister Marie Ange lit the lamp. It was the last time Tessa would ever see her light it.

They did not go down to supper in the refectory. The Mother sent bread and milk and fruit. Sister Marie Ange made Tessa eat, as she had made her

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eat when she was ill, and put her to bed like a little sick girl, as she had done then, and sat by her in the lamplight.

She gave Tessa a gift then, that Tessa loved because she gave it. It was a white necklace that Tessa's people, when she went back to their questioning, found to be of very beautiful big pearls.

Her people marvelled over it and asked her endless questions, to none of which she would answer. Aunt Agnes even wrote, unknown at the time to Tessa, to ask things of the Mother Superior, who, Tessa learned afterwards, in courteously responding, had only said that of the many women who came to retreat at the convent nothing ever was known to anyone but to herself, or ever was told by her regarding their identities.

But after years, when the swift, tragic death of a woman in whose heart had dwelt the black bird made mourning for all the courts of Europe, Tessa wondered if it could be possible that she understood.

The Weather

The Weather

EVERY year the three sons and their wives and the wife of the eldest son who was dead came to the château for the second of November.

It was on the second of November that the eldest son, Arnaud, had been killed.

He had come home for the Day of the Dead, as they all did, always, and after Mass in the château chapel he had gone down to the fields by the river to try a new mare over some hurdles he had had set up there. The mare had fallen with him, and they had brought him home dead to the château.

His wife, Evelyn, had not been there. He and she had not been together then for nearly a year. She had spent most of the time with her people in their home in England. It was said in the world that a separation had been about to be arranged. People wondered at the depths of her mourning, and that she did not marry again, and that when he had been dead for nearly six years she still was coming back to the château for the second of November.

It was always dark, sad weather for the second of November. Everyone arrived the night before by the Sud Express from Paris, and a complication of small ways from Bordeaux to Saint André, and

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from there over by barouche and wagonette—there was no motor—to the château.

Wet wraps were taken off. How those old carriages leaked and were draughty! And how slow! What a journey! How cold it was!

The old Monsieur would be angry. The château cold indeed, after Paris and the north! And if the carriages had been good enough for him all his life, they were good enough for his sons surely! Each year he was more angry. Guests' servants, castle servants, quantities of luggage. The old Madame was each time sure such boxes couldn't be got up the stairs,—old Louis and poor little Jean couldn't possibly. She was each year the more nervous.

The Comtesse Félix must have this, the Comtesse Jacques must have that, the Comtesse François the other thing; Félix scolded, Jacques grumbled, François sulked. There were only lamps and candles in the château, only open fires in the rooms and oil stoves in the corridors; hot water had to be fetched from Heaven knows how far, up stone stairs and along dark passages.

The old Madame cried, always, before dinner was got through. Evelyn knew it was because none of them ever was glad to see her that she cried. Curiously enough, it was the English

The Weather

daughter-in-law, the one who scarcely belonged to them any more, who understood how, each year, with the stupid trick of hoping that some women never get rid of, she had made sure they would be glad. Once the boys had been little boys, and had had need of her. She could not understand that they had no need of her any more. Once they had used to rush in at that door calling for her. She always thought, each year, surely it would be like that, this time.

The old Monsieur was made angry always by the things that made her cry. He was angry, each year afresh, that his sons did not appreciate "all he had done for them," did not see how much better all his ways were than their ways. He was angry that he could not punish them any more. He was angry because they were young and he was old, they were well and he was ill, of the world that would have no more of him, that they were bad when he had to be good.

The guests always came down late for dinner, with some excuse that was a complaint; there had not been enough light to dress by, and the water had been quite cold, or the fire had smoked, and there hadn't been anywhere to put anything.

Dinner, candlelight, curtains of shadow that hung unstirred in the distances of the room, old

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Sèvres candlesticks and fruit baskets full of grapes, and four old Sèvres swans floating on the long mirror like a pool on the table.

One hour and a half in the salon. In the fire-light the portraits of Arnaud's people looked down from shadowy walls upon soft old colours, and lovely old shapes, and carvings of things. Since Evelyn remembered, every chair had had its same place. The same chairs had always been grouped before the fire, and about the table of the lamp, and the day-before-yesterday's papers, and the albums of faded photographs, and about the old Madame's tapestry frame.

The father of Arnaud, grown old and ill, would sit in his special chair by the great fire and try to keep awake before the young people, that they might not laugh at him. He would sit up very straight. He was still a handsome man. One could see very well yet why women had loved him. And why his wife had loved him. She had loved him just as much as had any of the other women, all the years. Not as this one had, or as that one had, for a year, for a week or two, but all, the whole of the time. When he was young and splendid, with the world for his, he had not been kind to her. Now he was old and ill, and the world forgot him. And he had need of her. And how good she was to him.

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She tried to keep up his dignity before his sons. "Your father made such and such an arrangement about the river farm, see how well it has succeeded! He knew from the first how it would be. He knew so much better than the régisseur. And have you heard what he said to the Mayor at the opening of the schools? The Paris papers quoted it." She would try to bring him into the talk, that it was she herself who so unflaggingly kept up. "Do you not think so?" she would ask him, and she would repeat to him what Félix had said that he hadn't caught, and drag him into the discussions of Mesdames Jacques and François.

She was a little, very thin, straight woman, quick as a bird. In her stiff dresses of long-ago fashions, she always made Evelyn think of a little nervous brown bird, afraid of things. She talked nervously much and fast, afraid that the children and their father might have time to quarrel.

In that hour in the salon Evelyn thought it was because it all amused her that she tried as she did to help her mother-in-law. She would pretend interest in the tapestries, conversation would be kept up indefinitely about the blues and greens of the parrots' tails that were too long. She would pretend that the old man understood her when she talked to him, and never seem to see when he fell to nodding. And when he waked suddenly, and said

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something that had something to do with the talk of half an hour ago, she always knew what he meant, and took it up, and answered him.

At last old Louis and little Jean brought in siphons and syrops and biscuits.

After that there was escape.

They all trooped up the stairs together.

It was always cold on the stairs. Mesdames Jacques and François had wraps brought them to put on as they went up. The old Madame was always hurt and offended by that.

The corridor of most of the bedrooms was entered by a green baize door on the right, as one went up the stairs. The corridor was heated along its long length by little oil stoves, and there was always a peculiar smell of the stoves that came out through the green baize door to the stairs.

All the family turned that way, through the green baize door, except Evelyn.

That way was the "petit appartement," that would have been hers and Arnaud's.

The ménage Félix had it.

She remembered Arnaud's first bringing her there; he had opened the heavy old carved black door for her, and had trod on her dress,—the long skirt of those days,—clumsily; and she had laughed, and he had laughed.

They had laughed at everything then.

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Afterwards all the laughter,—except a cruel, dreadful laughter,—had gone out of it; and the bad times, that were very bad, had come to be more and more frequent, and each one to last longer than the one before, till finally it had been all one bad time, cruelly, bitterly laughable.

In the world she remembered the bad time. And downstairs in the château, in the entrance hall and in the dining-hall and in the salons, it was only the bad time she thought of.

She would bid good-night to the others, and turn from the green baize door and go on alone up the stairs.

Once, when he and she were playing hide-and-seek, she had been very long not finding him, and suddenly, for no reason, she had wanted him quite dreadfully; and, for no reason in the world, had got into a panic of fear. It had been almost dark on the stairs. She had been crying as she called him. He had come running down the stairs to her.

There was an oil lamp set in the old torch irons beside the door that opened from the stairs to her corridor. She never knew why it was, but always there she had some vague thought of the lamp-light shining on his bright hair and in his eyes.

The rooms that were hers now were the rooms that had been his before their marriage. He had been twenty when they married, and she had been

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eighteen. He had showed her where the peacocks lived in the cedars close against the windows of his room, that was hers now. He had told her how, when he was very little, he had thought a dragon lived in the great black armoire. He had showed her where he used to hide from the abbé, outside the window on the stone coping.

In that room it seemed to her that their mood of boy and girl was the only thing left to her of reality. It seemed to her that all the people who had crowded in between them in their life were unreal. Why had they ever let such unreal things matter?

She did not know if his death had been a great grief to her. There had been so much grief before it. She did not know if her life was empty because he was gone out of it. Or if it were because he and she had begun so well, that she could not seem, without him, to take hold and begin again.

In those nights in his room, she felt her heart as heavy as a stone. She used to think,—how much all the world must know of grief, how usual a thing grief must be, to have had it become a world's common-place that hearts are like stones.

When the late dawns came to her window she was always tired.

Her maid would bring in her coffee early, about seven o'clock.

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The Mass would be at half-past nine.

At half-past eight, always, her mother-in-law would come up to her room.

“May one come in, Evelyn?”

“But I pray you to, my mother.”

The old Madame would have been out already for perhaps an hour attending to things about the estate. She would be wearing the extraordinary hat and coat she had worn, it seemed to Evelyn, always. Little and quick, probably her skirts wet and her shoulders and the brim of her hat, her thick boots sure to be muddy, she brought something very sane and good of out-of-doors into the room with her.

She would say that it was rainy or foggy, and cold.

Evelyn would draw a chair close to the fire for her. She would sit down herself, opposite, across the dim old rug. And the two of them would stay so for half an hour.

Sometimes they would talk, a little, of how the vines had been, or of the wheat, or of something that had happened in one of the villages or about the place; but more often they would sit not speaking at all.

Evelyn knew quite well, always, why she came. It was because she wanted her son's wife to speak of him. But Evelyn could not speak of him. She

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would sit opposite Arnaud's mother and look at her, and she would be thinking, "She stayed, she waited. And now she has the old Monsieur's need of her to live for. She has her giving of comfort to him. After all of it, they have got back to something of the beginning."

At the end of the half-hour, her mother-in-law would say, "Well, it is nine o'clock! We must be getting ready for the Mass."

And she would go.

At Mass, she, the old Madame, cried behind a heavy veil. Her thin, little, erect shoulders shook as she cried. She sat in the big chair to the right, facing the altar under the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Madame Félix had the chair on the left, under the statue of Saint Anthony of Padua. Mesdames Jacques and François had places also close to the altar. They all three of them always cried.

One or another of the boys usually cried too. They sat near to the door on the right.

The servants and the farmers and the game-keepers and the villagers had their places on the left.

The old Monsieur sat inside the altar rail, to the right of the altar, where the purple and red and blue lights of the altar window slanted down

The Swans

the grey walls and the black oak carving. He cried, of course.

The abbé and the choir child moved about before the altar, and their voices sounded before it.

Evelyn never could follow what passed at the altar. She was thinking of out-of-doors. Arnaud had wanted always to be out-of-doors. She thought of him fidgeting through the Mass beside her. He had been impatient always to get out with his dog and his gun. The Day of the Dead had meant very little to him, who had no dead, and who was to be dead so soon. It seemed very strange to Evelyn at Mass in the chapel that he should be become part of the day, part of its sorrow and its worship. She could not think of him as the others did, in far, high places. She could only think of him as the boy who would have been cross because it rained.

The Swans

AUDE used to go down to the gold pool and make friends with the swans, only because they were beautiful. She hated them. She had been afraid of them ever since she was a little child. Now she was seventeen. There was a black swan with a red

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bill and red eyes. He was the one she was most afraid of.

The gold pool was at quite a distance from the château. One went down from the south of the court by five terraces, by steps that were stained green and grey and orange and blood-red with moss and lichen, broken and sunken down, deep into the uncared-for grass.

The rough, overgrown, wide road into the forest had been a splendid avenue in the days of the Grand Monarch. In books it was called "The Way of the Dead Favourite," as the gold pool was called her pool, "L'Etang de la Favorite Morte."

Her name also had been Aude.

It was told in books how she had followed the percée and come to the pool and drowned herself in it, before the Sun King's favour left her. She had been too beautiful. She had been loved too gorgeously. It had wearied her. She had been given too much. She had had to die when too much of the gold of life had been given her.

This Aude was sure that, out where the swans floated in the midst of gold autumn sunsets, the seven white ones and the one black one, there must be floating the other, the beautiful Aude, so light, like swan's down, with slender arms outstretched, white as the seven white swans' throats, and hair as black as the black swan's breast, all

The Swans

tragically clouding. The gold of autumn sunsets lay on her closed eyes.

This Aude knew how the soul of the Dead Favourite had passed out like a little flame from between her lips, a little gold flame, into the great gold of the sunset.

She liked best to go to the pool in autumn sunsets, when the swans would be drifting in gold. She would go close to the edge and kneel and call to them, and they would come sailing over to her across the pool; lovely ships, white-winged, and the black one, so strange and sinister.

They would come quite close to the edge of the pool when she called them.

She would feed them with bits of bread.

Sometimes her father would come and meet her at the gold pool, when she went to feed the swans.

He could not come often, and he and she never could come out from the château together.

If the mother of Aude had known of it, she would have been angry. She never could bear it that they were together, that they had together a moment, a look, a word, a thought that left her out. It was not that they meant to leave her out. But there was a thing that was like a golden thread between them, that they held the ends of, that she could see, and that was not for her. She could not touch it. She knew this and was angry. And,

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when she was angry, always she had an attack of the heart. And she might die in any one of these attacks.

Aude was afraid of death, just as she was afraid of the swans, the black one especially. At the end of a too long race, she had been born with a sense of death.

Everything of the life of the château belonged to death, and the finishings and endings of things, to all wearings out and passings away. The steep, narrow stone stairs of the château were cold even in summer, and dark even at noon.

In feudal days the fortress château had been built there, on the lift of a hill, to dominate the wide lands of forest. It had walled in the four sides of the court, to which yet the old drawbridge admitted, and where the well was. Entrance to the château in old times was only possible from the drawbridge. Even if that failed, a dozen men could have held the one narrow door of the north tower, the château's only opening, and the narrow, steep, winding stone stairs inside, against a host. Aude was always afraid on the stairs.

Afterwards, all the buildings on the south of the court, the hill's edge, had been torn down by some ancestor of Aude's who had loved south winds and the sun. But all the winds, even the south wind, that came to the château sang dirges.

The Swans

The winds all sang dirges in the forest with harp and lyre, and in the long corridors of the château. And always mists came to lie along the stone floors of the corridors, and of the great empty rooms.

The flight of the bats that had their abode in the unused parts of the château, the cry of the owls in the cedar trees against the north windows, the smell of the ragged, faded tapestries that the winds stirred along the walls of the Guards' Room, the menace of the broken ancient armour in the corners, the wearing down, by years of treading, of the steps of the stairs, the smell of mould and mildew and rust that there was everywhere, all had intimately to do with the sense of death that there was with Aude always.

Her father and mother and she were always alone together. There were no neighbours near enough to be reached by people who could not have a motor, or even keep up the stables. Aude remembered that when she was very little, her father and mother had gone away sometimes. And people had come sometimes to the château. But now there was no more going away or having people come. There was poverty, real poverty, in the château that was falling to ruin. And there was pride that would hide poverty. Poverty and pride must close themselves in away together. There were odours of mildew and rust, and there was the

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dirge of the winds, and there was the shadow of the end upon everything.

Aude never remembered a time when she had not felt the shadow.

She knew that her father felt it. They never spoke of it to one another. But she knew.

They were very careful, her father and she, because they knew how their understanding of one another, and their content together, quite left out Aude's mother; and how she felt that, and hated it.

Only, sometimes, when Aude was kneeling at the stone rim of the pool, feeding bits of bread to the swans and talking to them, her father would come to her; she would see him in the gold water of the pool, his tall, stooping figure and his grey hair and his saint's face, as he stood watching.

Once, in the autumn, when she was seventeen, her father said to her, "I wonder, was she happier than thou, that other Aude, who lived too much, and died of life?"

"Was she happier than I?" wondered Aude, who had no life at all, and would die of the weariness of never having lived. "I do not know," she said, giving the best bits of bread to the black swan, that she was most afraid of, and that came closest.

The Mirror

The Mirror

WHAT she felt, when she came in from the autumn woods and the dusk to the lamplight and shadows of the stately old hall, and saw the telegram there on the table under the mirror, was that she did not want him to come back.

She stood and looked at the blue telegram, and knew, in one instant, after all the long time, that she did not want him to come back.

She had wanted it too long.

Every day, through the months of nearly three years, she had waked in the morning with all her youth and strength put into the intensity of hoping that this day she would hear from him. And every night she had gone to sleep with the hope to burn on in her dreams, that word of him might come to-morrow.

She had eaten her bread with tears, and grief had been her bedfellow.

At dawn she had said—would God it were evening. And at night—would God it were morning.

But all the time she had hoped.

That was why she had gone on living.

Often she had thought that hope was the most cruel thing, the most cruel of all the deadly cruel things of the world, because it is the thing that keeps from there ever being an end.

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If it had not been for hope, she could so simply have ended it.

But she had had to hope, from day to day, since the day when she had come in and found the letter that told her he was gone away with the other woman.

She had not been able to believe it. She had thought it could not be possible. They had been so young together and happy. Then they had been such good comrades. There had been so many little things.

Through all the time, she had kept thinking of the most absurd little things, the way he had had of slouching, one shoulder hitched up, the way he used his fine hands, a little clumsily. She had so loved all the little finenesses that there were about him, and the little absurdities. She had loved, with an amused tenderness, this little way of his and that. He had been so systematically untidy. She had loved the absurd rows of boots lined against the wall of his dressing-room.

That the boots were gone had been terrible.

How absurd it all was!

And it was so much the more tragic because it was absurd. The most tragic love is surely that which knows how absurd it is, by what absurd things it lives, and does not care.

She had not cared if it were without dignity

The Mirror

or self-respect of her to take it as she did, to do nothing, and say nothing and wait. She had not cared if people knew, or what they thought. She had told herself that he was gone away on a journey, and that he would come back, and she would wait for him.

When it had seemed to her she could not bear it, she had thought how surely some day he would need her.

He had always needed her in absurd little ways.

It killed her to think how always he had called to her the minute he had come in at the door. And yet it was for things like that she had stayed alive.

Often she had thought she heard him call to her, and had answered, or had come quickly. Once in the night she had been so sure he was there that she had stood with her candle on the stairs, listening, till daylight came.

Every morning old Margarie brought the post up from the village. There would be the slow heavy step down the passage and the clumsy knock at the door. Each time she did not know if it was worse to open the door quickly and be sure the letter was not there, or to move slowly, to say, "Wait, Margarie," and put off knowing.

She never came into the house without wondering,—dared she look for a telegram on the table

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under the mirror? And now the blue telegram was there on the table.

It was a huge carved black table of the time of the thirteenth Louis. The mirror over it was a dim vague blur of little square panes, one saw oneself in it with the queerest distortions.

She knew, as she looked at the telegram on the table under the mirror, what it would say. And she knew that it had come too late. She did not even care to open it. She was so tired. Suddenly she knew that she was tired out with hoping. She had put everything into hope, and there was nothing left. That which she had hoped for had come, and she did not care. She never could care again.

It was as if something were worn out and had stopped.

She had lived for a word from him. And when it came, she was dead.

She could not even open the telegram that lay on the table under the mirror.

As she stood there, she saw her face dim and distorted in the old glass. And it seemed to her that in all the years after, however she got through life, she would have to remember that moment as the moment when she died.

War Sunsets

War Sunsets

ALL through the spring and summer of the year when little old Madame had to be taken away, there were the most strange sunsets. Even the men in the Place des Grands Seigneurs used to talk of those sunsets as they stood about the door of the café of Jean Louis.

The Place des Grands Seigneurs was a humble cobbled square to which the market came on Thursdays, charming with field things and village things and red umbrellas and old women's white caps and sabots; and where, on all days, the children played under the lime trees, and the girls lingered by the moat wall to laugh with the boys at sunset. The lime trees closed in all one side of the square, the castle side, over the moat and under the ancient dungeon tower. The village boys used to come when school was out to play follow-my-leader along the top of the ivy-hung wall. Across the moat, the outer court of the château was so deep-set in lime trees that from the market-place one could not see the château at all, only the tall, grey, battlemented dungeon tower. On all sides the château was crowded in closely by its ancient bourg, steep-pitched, age-stained roofs, poor and beautiful, huddled against its ramparts, cobbled streets leading

Accidentals

all of them up to it. The towers of defence still stood on either side of the great wrought-iron gate, with its fers de lance and panaches dorés and heraldic lions. The market-place, close at the gate, had always felt itself to be part of the castle, an entrance-court for it. Indeed the whole village felt itself to be part of the castle, as if the poorest house belonged to the building of its strength.

No one was left of the long line of castle people but young Monsieur le Vicomte and the old Madame, his mother, who was a little mad, and who was terribly afraid of the sunsets that year.

In April, at the end of exquisite, Madonna-blue, pale days, those flaming sunsets came, flinging their mad banners out, crimson, over the valley, over the roofs of the little town, setting the windows on fire. Black and purple clouds heaped up the horizon over the fields and the river.

Little, fragile, dainty old Madame came out to the market-place one April night with a black lace scarf over her head, and told the people that the red of the sky over them all, reflected a red there was to be in their fields, and that the fires of their windows told of flames to burn there, and that the smoke along the hills meant clouds of battle.

One night in May, when there had been rain, and the cobbles of the market-place, and all the valley

War Sunsets

roads, were wet, and reflected the sunset, she told everyone who would listen to her how it was with blood that the land was wet and shining. "It is the blood of your hearts," said little old Madame whom all the people of the village pitied.

In June it was very hot and there was often the sound of thunder in the air, and Madame told the people in the Place des Grands Seigneurs that the thunder was part of the battle music of the sunset.

Towards the end of June, Monsieur le Vicomte had a great doctor come down from Paris, and after that there were sick nurses at the château, and the old lady did not come out any more to the market-place.

Only in the evening of the 14th July, when the market-place was making ready for the dance—a floor of boards spread over the cobbles, and lanterns strung through the lime trees, and the tricolour drooping from the gilded poles—Madame came and stood at the gate between her ancestors' proud lions. One of the nurses was with her.

The round red sun went down behind the tiles of Jean Louis' roof, the shadows gathered under the lime trees; Madame stood silently.

She watched the men and girls putting the last touches to the preparation of their fête, and the children already dancing about, and the mothers

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who had brought their babies out to look. She seemed smaller and whiter and more strange even than usual that night.

When the sunset was gone and it was growing chilly, and Jean Louis lighted his café, the nurse made little old Madame come back to the château. Only she cried out before they could stop her, so loud and strong that all the market-place heard and understood, "They can't kill the soul of France—they can't—they can't!"

The nurse made her come back to the château, and the people of the market-place thought how sad it was, and some of them were quite frightened for a moment.

Paper Ropes

ONE day, when she was a very little girl, she and her nurse Fanchon were down in the village, where they had gone with the pony-cart to fetch something, and in the market-place she saw a thing that she was to remember always, and that was to come to have always more and more meaning for her.

It was a September day, and noon, and the market-place of the old Provençal town was full

Paper Ropes

of a sunny gauze of heat. The platanos, with their shadow close beneath them, made a very black square frame that held the heat and sunshine. Two or three men were dozing at the café tables, and there were some dogs asleep. The tall Romaine tower of the church swam in the sky's hot blue. There was not a swallow stirring. Under the arcades of the round pink arches one could see nothing, the shade was so deep, and no sound came from there. It was not a market day, so the old cobbled square was left to possession of anyone who wanted it. And the boys of the village had taken possession of it.

There was a crowd of them, shrieking with laughter, out in the middle of it. They had got the village fool there, lashed down with strips of paper, on his back on the cobbles.

The crétin thought he could not break the paper ropes. He thought he was a prisoner. He did not struggle at all, but lay with the paper ropes wound around and around him, weeping helplessly and hopelessly.

Fanchon stopped the pony-cart, and stood up in it and laughed.

She thought it was the most droll of all droll things in the world, to see the crétin helplessly, hopelessly weeping, bound with paper ropes.

Little Alix, from the high-swung pony-cart,

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looked down among the boys in black blouses and sabots, at the emaciated, ill-shapen body and shaggy white head of the fool, and saw his face, ugly as a gargoyles, distorted with tears.

The boys danced about him, howling with laughter. Their sabots set the dust dancing; it whitened the fool's rags.

The lazy grey pony switched off the flies with his long, beautiful tail, and stamped his polished hoofs on the cobbles.

Fanchon stood with the reins over her arm and her hands on her hips, and laughed, delighted.

Alix was to remember the thing always, the quiver of heat and sunshine over the cobbles, the smell of the church that came out from its open door, a red earthen water-jar that someone had left on the rim of the old stone fountain. There was to stay with her always the sense of the carelessness of the men at the café tables, of the mirth of the boys in the dust and sunshine, and of Fanchon standing up in the pony-cart.

Four Tapers

Four Tapers

THE little ancient town on the top of the hill was sunburned and wind-beaten, all of it the colour of poor people's old straw hats. It was a town of Dauphiné, of the Drôme, named from a favourite saint of the south. It seemed to be as old as the hills about it, and to belong to its place as if it were part of the hills and the mistral and the sunshine. The tiles of its flat, overhanging roofs and the cobbles of its narrow streets, the walls of its houses, the crumbling Roman walls that still encircled it, the high-lifted square church tower, the arcades of its Grande Place, were all beaten together by mistral, and melted and moulded together in the heat of the sun, and stained by weathers to ochre and umber and saffron, and worn to soft edges by long passing over of Time. At the end of all its streets one saw hills olive laden, or spaces of vine, opened away to crimson and blue and gold and purple distances. The stony bed of the river, the Aigue, that ran under the ancient walls, was sunburned and sunsoaked as yellow as the town.

The market-place of old arcades and of the Roman fountain was densely shaded by those great platanes of the Midi. There were rose laurels, blossoming through autumn, set in green tubs be-

Accidentals

fore the door of the café. The rasping of an accordion and the shuffle of dancing feet came out from the café on market days to the busy market-place.

On a certain October market day, the Grande Place was full of most beautiful things. There were baskets heaped with white and purple grapes, and there were piles of lettuces and cabbages and aubergines and tomatoes, strings of amethyst and opal onions, heaps of orange gourds, and baskets full of green beans, and of citrons and of pomegranates. The market women were busy in their white caps and wooden shoes. The market-place was full of footsteps and voices. The wooden shoes and the soft Provençal words sang through it. The beasts on their side of the market-place, the sheep and calves and the big white velvet oxen, waited patiently. The men stood about together there. In the booths about the fountain there were shoes and cotton stuffs for sale, and the straw hats, and there were copper pots and jugs, and things of hammered iron, cranes and cauldrons, and coarse, dull green and yellow earthen jars of antique shapes. The cur dogs and the children played in and out, through the buying and selling. There were many pretty girls in the market-place, and some of the young men kept following them about, laughing over nothing at all.

South Road

The market-place was intensely, violently, alive. How terribly one felt the life that there was in it.

But there was a door under the arcades on the most sunny side of the market-place that was draped in black. Inside the door everything was black except the four tiny white points that were the flames of the tapers. Unless one troubled to go close, one could not see what there was between the tapers. The sunshine of the market-place was so gloriously strong that the light of the tapers meant nothing in it.

And what was there that the thought of death need mean in the fullness of life of the piazza? No more than the pale small lights of the tapers meant in the glory of the sunshine.

South Road

THE road, out beyond the Roman bridge and the wide, yellow stony bed of the river, lifted itself up through the hills, passed the cemetery, with its cypress trees as tall and slim and straight as lance blades, passed a few yellow-brown farms, and a roofless house with a pigeon tower, across maize fields of carrot, vineyards, and groves of olive and

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mulberry, always hedged on the north against the mistral, through woods of green oak, through pastures wonderful with smells of lavender and wild thyme, up and up, through mountains to mountains, through golden lights and blue and purple shadows to lights and shadows always more intense and sadder.

There was some travel at first, on the road. One would meet a two-wheeled cart going in to the old market-town, the peasant and his wife, in festa dress, behind their little red-tasselled horse. One would meet a pedlar's cart, gaily painted, with tinkling bells, and forlorn mule, hobbling so slowly that the pedlar's wild-haired children had time to stop, as they ran with the cart, where it pleased them to gather poppies and chase butterflies. One would meet little flocks of sheep or of goats being driven along the road, managed less by the master than by the rough shaggy dog who had such anxious eyes. One would meet market carts heaped with country green, and dusty stone-carts, and carts loaded with meal sacks or wine barrels or oil jars, the driver perhaps asleep on his bench under the weather-coloured canvas hood, or walking beside his big cream-white oxen.

But, as one went, the passing on the road grew less and less, the road turned out of ways that led to alive, remembered places, into solitudes where

South Road

there was a deep and still, an unstirred, an ages-old abiding of a mood which was the land's very own.

Everywhere along the road one felt the south, the midi, the noon.

One felt it because of some special quality, some texture, of the lights and shadows, as if the gold and the black were tangible; and because of the lines and shapes of things; the line of the mountains on the sky, and of the nearer hills against the mountains; the shape of a hill town, heaped up, walls and roofs and church tower and perhaps castle battlements, against the sky's blue; the towering up of cypresses; the way the stone pines had of taking on the shapes of the rocks they stood against; the special fitness and belonging that fig tree and live oak and olive had at the edge of the road in their places, and that the towns had on the hill-tops, and the mountains had in the sky. The neglect and carelessness and abandon of the south were upon everything. In the north, a field or a pasture would have some boundary, a hedge would enclose something, a road would lead somewhere. But in the south the reasons for everything were so old that they had ceased to be reasons, except for people who dreamed. There was a stately avenue of platanes that ended at a heap of stones. There was a strong old wall that shut in a tangle of blue

Accidentals

thistles. There were four cypresses planted regularly, as if about a tomb or an altar, standing alone in a field of wild carrot. The indescribable smell of the south was there. The hot, brass shrilling of grasshoppers came from the fields, and the singing of frogs came from all damp places, and of nightingales from the groves. If there were mistral, or if there were deep stillness, all the sounds, even the sounds that belonged to the stillness, were those of the south.

Because it was the south, everywhere along the road, there was for one that ache of beauty and sorrow, that something which makes one feel beauty always with a sense of the word fatal.

All along the road there would come to one those swift stabs of pain, or of pleasure, that make one catch one's breath suddenly, and think of death, and love life the more intensely, because what is most beautiful of it is so absolutely a part of sorrow.

The Moon Faun

The Moon Faun

ONE night, in the vineyards and olive groves of September and of Provence, when the whole land was full of moonlight, and utterly beautiful and strange, and with all moon madness in it, there was a little, young, white faun who went quite wild.

Upon all the land there lay the spell that the moon draws out of the sea as she draws the tides, and out of the forests as she draws from them their cool dewy wet and their silences, and out of the gardens as she draws from them their most intense fragrances, and out of the fields as she draws from them the mystery of their yielding of life to men.

The whole land, deep-sunk in the moon's enchantment, lay wrapt and marvellous, hill and valley and grove and stream.

It was that wonderful, pure, cool, white moon which comes next before the golden moon of harvest, and is made of frost and silver and magic. The world under its magic was as beautiful as any radiance of the old joyous gods, or as the deep dusk of the new god, who gave to all glad beauty that other beauty of tears.

The little, young, white faun went mad with the moon, through the vineyards and olive groves,

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through fields of maize and carrot, up the hillside of pine and lavender and wild thyme, down along the stony river bed, mad with the moonlight's giving of joy and its giving of grief.

He tossed his white horns and stamped his white hoofs, and laughed to the moon. He tore up great trails of white moon flowers that were not there at all, and ran, dragging them after him through the moonlight, ran, ran, trailing after him, riotously, those haunting, moon-white flowers of the ecstasy and agony of madness.

The Half-gods and the Little Chapel

THERE was a little, half-ruined, ancient chapel high up on the Provençal hillside, above the vineyards and above the olives, above even the grass slopes where the flocks were pastured in summer, above the wild thyme and lavender, far up where there were only grass and cactus and stone pine.

No one knew how the chapel had come to be built there; perhaps in fulfilment of some vow of a people gone long ago; perhaps to the memory of some event, ages ago forgotten.

No one ever went to the chapel, except once a year, on the day of its name saint, when the priest

The Half-gods and the Little Chapel

from the nearest village, which was far away, led a little procession trudging slowly up there, and said Mass for the dozen, perhaps, of peasants who had followed him, with all due homage of bell and incense and book and candle. For the rest of the year, the chapel was forgotten, no one ever had troubled so much as to fasten its door.

So perhaps the little old gods of the hills used to go there,—those little half-gods from whom men have taken away the groves and fountains and streams. The half-gods of the old days, who once had been so blithe and fearless, would perhaps come timidly to the chapel, and open its rusty, cobwebby door, and peer in with their anxious wild eyes, and finding it always empty would creep in to the place that was almost as forsaken and lonely as they.

The great gods of ancient days had gone away far from the world, with their lightning and thunder, and lust and riot, and splendour and pride; but perhaps the little half-gods had been left behind, forgotten and afraid, to hide as they might, among the vines, and in the groves of green oak and olive, and by the fountains, and along the streams that once had been their own. They would have been afraid, hiding in the land that men had taken from them. But they would not have been afraid in the old, forsaken little chapel.

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Everything in the chapel was hurt with mildew and rust and dust. The stone floor was broken, and pierced through all along its cracks by weeds and grasses, and stained with moss and lichen and growth of fungus, and the window over the altar was curtained with cobwebs. There was a black iron cross in a deep niche over the altar, and the opening of the niche was covered with a netting of wire. Lizards crept in and out through the mesh of the netting, and hornets had crawled through and built a beautiful, neat, big grey nest behind the cross. There were two stone vases on the altar, always empty of flowers. On the walls there was something left yet of the painting, that time and weather had taken for their own long ago. There were to be made out dimly, the figures of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows and of the Man on the cross, the ages-old newcomers who had driven the old gods out of their world, and who had known one thing that the old gods, in their splendour and their revelling, had not known.

North Road

North Road

THE road lay for a distance along the crest of the drifted dunes, following up and down the rise and fall of the dunes, that were like the waves of the sea when there was wind, and that had been made by all the sea winds blowing upon France through ages.

There was no wind that autumn afternoon, and the sea was quite smooth, and of a blue as dark and as irised as the blue that lines a crow's wing. There were dark blue clouds heaped on the rim of the sea, and the sun was gone down into them, and their shadow and darkness lay upon nearly all the sea, though the sky overhead was clear yet. At the edge of the cloud-masses, the sky had a golden shining from the sun that the clouds hid, and that was repeated in the sea again, towards the shore, where the waves were breaking. The waves broke softly, in the golden shining.

Away from the sea, the land was bright, out of the shadow. The salt marshes were stained black and blue and purple by the storm that there had been yesterday, but the water of the marshes, through the wind and rain-trampled grass, had a golden shining like the sky. The fields beyond the marshes were some of them red-brown with the

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autumn ploughing, and some of them live green with winter wheat. The green of the pastures was dull and blurred, almost a grey. Some of the fields were bordered by pollard willows. There were people working in one of the fields. The faded rust-red brown of a man's blouse, the faded indigo blue of a woman's skirts, the white, wide wings of an old woman's cap, seemed to belong with all the colours of sky and fields and dunes and sea. In another field there were six big, soft cream-white oxen, made of velvet, dragging a plough. The dim green turf curled over in the wake of the plough into warm, alive, red-brown. In the pastures there were sheep and red cattle. There were multitudes of great black crows. They sat on the backs of the sheep in the pastures, and followed after the plough in the red field.

After a while, the road turned from the dunes inland.

There was a village, off across the fields, that looked like a flock of grey sea-birds settled down. It was a grey little village, but the faces of its old, poor houses caught something bright from the sky's clear shining, something that was like the whiteness of grey sea-birds when they give their breasts and tip-tilted under-wings to the sun.

Some of the people who lived in the houses were going home to them already in the road, with the

Night and the Bells

tools of their work in the fields over their shoulders.

The road was wet from the rain that there had been, and the sunset light from over the top of the clouds shone in the wet, and the road was gold, a royal road.

There was an old woman, bent under a bundle of driftwood, as twisted and deformed and sea-worn as the driftwood, going, a black figure, down the gold of the royal road.

Night and the Bells

Out at sea, where night was gathering, there was a flock of dark-winged sail-boats coming in slowly.

Closer in, there were many seagulls, circling low over the dark depths and pale edges of the waves. The wings of the seagulls were dark like the sails of the boats against the twilight.

Little long-legged snipe ran through the shallow widespreading of the waves, where they came in and receded on the sands.

The wet of the sands still glistened a little.

The bells of the village inland were tolling to the sounds of the sea and the voices of the seabirds.

Someone was dead in the village.

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The bells were ringing, as night came, drawing its folds in close, "Have pity of him! Give him rest eternally!" Out of the dark into the dark the bells urged desolately, "And that the perpetual light shine for him!"

Sea Bells

THERE was a fishing village, away off to the south. Its cabins lay low along the crest of the dunes. Many of them were the overturned hulls of old fishing-boats, and had so a special belonging of their own to the sea.

It was after sunset, and there was mist inland. The sea was clear of mist. The fishing-boats were coming in, on their wings of seabirds. Some of them were already drawn up along the sands, and the figures of the fishermen moved about them, toiling at the ropes and unloading the baskets of fish. The figures of the women, bent under heavy baskets, plodded across the sands and up the dune path to the cabins. The boats on the sands and the figures of the people were all very strange and dim in the mist, as one saw them from far off.

In the village of old wrecked boats, there would

Sea Bells

be going on all the brown and rust colour and grey and black life of the sea people, smells of fish and seaweed and salt and tar, light of the hearth fire and of the candle, smell of the steaming soup.

But all that was far off, not real at all. The whole world, land and sea and sky, was unreal in the white mist. And it was very silent. If one stood quite still and listened, one could hear the sea bells ringing. One could hear the sea bells ringing through the soft wash of the waves and the calling of the goëlands.

Some of the fisher people said that the bells were the cathedral bells of a city that once was off the coast, now sunk deep down under the sea. They said that once in that place there had been a splendid city, and that the sea had taken it, and that its bells still rang and rang, far down below. Others of the fisher people could not believe in the great city, but thought that the bells were the bells of the flocks and herds of the mer king. And there was an old woman—mad since her man and her two sons had been lost at sea—who said that the bells were just the sea bells, that never had had to do at all with touch of men or mer creatures: that the sea was tolling all alone for her man and the two boys, down in the deep repose there was for them under its ebb and flow.

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Sea Under Music

Down by the sea the marshes caught the red of the sunset, and the sea was red.

The fisher-boats of dark wings came home out of marvellous spaces that were filled with music.

Along the dune path black figures, bent under heavy loads, went home, after the day's labour, wearily, not keeping step at all to the triumphant music of the sky, the march that seemed to call to battle, gorgeously. Down on the beach, black figures strained at the ropes to haul the nets in, and it seemed strange that they should have to toil so in the midst of glory. All the people in the dune path, and the people on the wide, level beach, seemed to be black things in the red sunset, bent, twisted, distorted things, things that the sea had taken and played with.

The bells of the Ave Maria of sunset, from the village over the sandhills, ringing golden and purple through the red of the sunset, had a strange part in the triumphant music.

The tide came in very quietly, though it seemed as if there should come wild-maned horses, galloping, out of that sunset, and thunder of surf or cannon, with the red war music of trumpet and fife and drum.

A Silence

THE painter and the lovely tall Comtesse Louis went down to the sea together in the wild morning, very early.

It was the storm that comes to Finisterre with the great August tides.

They went across the marshes by the path that he had taken very many times alone.

He had been annoyed when he arrived the night before, to find another guest stopping in the fisherman's cabin, that he and Pierre de Sainte Anne had always called their Castle of the Sea. Since Pierre's marriage, his sweet, little, shy wife had scarcely disturbed the mood of the place, but her friend brought the world there. Her charming dress last night had seemed to the Englishman to spoil the rooms, their candlelight and whitewashed walls and old black rafters. He had always had pleasure in the shadows the candlelight threw very black upon the wide, bare white spaces of the walls—Pierre's big fine shadow, and his own in splendid contrast, hunchbacked, grotesque. The pretty shadow of Pierre's wife had taken its place quietly among the shadows of the rude, old peasant furniture. But her friend's restless shadow, with its

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outline of the moment's exact fashion, annoyed him there, as did the tap of her high-heeled slippers on the rough brick floor. He had been annoyed, in the stormy morning, when she called down to him over the stairs just as he was going out.

The steep narrow stairs came down straight into the living-room from which the door opened to the road and the marshes. He had been at the door with his hand on the latch. The storm was raging against the door, and he had delayed a moment for the pleasure of listening to it.

He had heard her voice, "Wait, I am coming with you."

He called back, "No, no, it is too bad a storm."

She came running down the stairs. She wore a long grey cloak and had a grey veil over her face. He could not see her face at all.

She came to him at the door and said, "I must go, let me come with you." She said it in a very odd way. Her voice was strained and intense. "I must go," she said, "I must, and I can't go alone."

It was all very hurried and odd. She said, "Open the door quickly." He got it open to the wild light and the great salt wet wind. She passed him, out through the door. He had some difficulty in getting the door shut again, and she

A Silence

did not wait for him. She went on across the road and through the pines to the marsh. He followed her, but he did not come up with her. He did not speak to her.

He felt that she could not have borne to have him speak to her or see her face. He knew it, as if there were something that came from her to him, that she allowed to go to him, because she was afraid of facing the storm alone with it. Fear came to him from her, and that unhappiness which makes fear, because the only step beyond it is into death. The thought of death came from her to him. It was as if it came to him along strange spirit threads that she let go, out with the winds, and of which he caught up the ends. He knew nothing of her, except that she was one of the most talked-of women in the great world of Paris, but he knew then, with a sense of taking up tangible threads, that she had some unhappiness so great that it drove her out into the storm, and made her afraid of being alone with the storm. She had had to come, and she had not dared to come alone. She had had to have someone. He had never had a place in her life, and never would have again, and she let him come into it in this hour.

When she found he did not try to come up with her, she threw her veil back. She had no hat, and her dark hair blew across her eyes. There was

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no rain for the moment; the world was full of wild storm lights, sudden lights, that came and went with the wind's driving of clouds. The marshes were trampled by the storm, the tall marsh grass laid low, bruised darkly. The pools of the marshes were wild mirrors of the sky. Between the dunes, the sea showed, trodden by storm like the marshes, swept over with great wind streaks, lashed with foam, as where a whip had cut. The sound of the sea came thundering in with the wind over the marshes.

The flying figure in the long grey cloak seemed to belong to the storm, to have part in it, like a seabird. He had an odd notion that something of her had always been there with him in the marsh path, some mood that was desperate and most lonely and afraid. It seemed to him very terrible that anyone so young as she should have to know despair and loneliness and fear.

Afterwards he wondered how he had known that she knew such things, why he had been so sure. But at the time it was not strange at all. He felt it, and knew.

They went across the marshes and climbed the dunes and came to wide full sight of the sea. The tide was out. The beach from the edge of the dunes to the edge of the sea was strewn with foam and seaweed and driftwood. It was storm-trodden

A Silence

and trampled, as the marshes were and as the sea was. The wild white-maned horses came in rushing, leaping, and rearing, sweeping up in their long lines. The waves had all the wide, long, empty beach for their own. Their long high lines swept up, lifting, towering, rearing, out of the great space of sea and sky.

He was always afterwards glad that he had not spoken to her as they stood there together. He stood quite still beside her, and did not look at her.

The thought of death came to him from her terribly, as they stood there together.

He wondered, would she ever dare that? He was terribly afraid of it for her. And then some even more great a fear of life for her came to him. Suddenly, life seemed to him a thing far more to be feared for her than death. Death was one great thing. Life was an infinity of little things. He was afraid of life, terribly, for her, in those minutes.

When she turned from the sea and the storm, to the marsh path again, that he never was any more to take without thought of her, he followed, still not speaking to her. He saw her go in at the low dark door of the Castle of the Sea. And then he turned away and tramped the marshes and the beach for a long time.

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He never could tell afterwards what the thought of her had meant to him in those hours.

When he came home to the Castle of the Sea he found a gay little Comtesse Louis, who meant nothing at all to him.

He was always to wonder if that morning really could have been true. He was to hear of the Comtesse Louis in the world and he was to wonder—was it true, could she really ever have been like that, a desperate, utterly lonely, storm-driven thing, that had had need of his silence, not of any word he might have said, not of any touch, not even of his understanding?

White Sunset

TOWARDS the end of the soft autumn day, two people were walking together on a wide, long, empty beach, where the distances were lost in mist, and from which the tide had drawn far out.

The sand dunes towards the east lay in a mist that deepened and darkened, and the sun was going down through mist into the sea. There was no colour of sunset anywhere, it was all white, like

White Sunset

moonlight. The quiet sea under the sunset was like the sea under the moon, as mysterious; and it might have been indeed the moon, great and round and silver-white, going down into the sea, at the end of a path of silver.

The young master and mistress from the Manoir had been playing like children on the beach all the afternoon. They were almost children, though they had been married for two years. And they were very happy. She wore no hat, and her hair was soft, fine gold like a child's. She had taken off her shoes and stockings, and he had thought her feet were like little white birds. She had danced in the foam, in and out after the waves, down close at the edge of the tide. And she had been singing all the time. But when the mists gathered she stopped singing. She put on her stockings and shoes and walked soberly, and was very silent.

Everything had come to be silent. One scarcely heard the sound of the waves or the voices of the seabirds.

The young master and mistress walked very close together, her shoulder touching his arm, through the white sunset that was so strange. He thought how strange the sunset was, as if it were an enchanted sunset and the whole world were under its spell. Nothing seemed real any more,

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except, for him, that she was near. In the silent loneliness, the great white, still loneliness of the world, he thought he was very near her. That was the only thing he was thinking of. He knew that it was a strange sunset, and it was beautiful, but the only thing he really felt was the touch of her shoulder against his arm. Because of that, he thought she was his.

But suddenly, close beside him, she said, "I am afraid."

"Afraid?" he repeated.

She said, "It is too beautiful."

Suddenly she was walking very fast, looking straight before her. It was as if she were going away from him.

"It is too beautiful," she said.

He kept up with her. "What is too beautiful?" he said, "of what are you afraid?" He got hold of her hand and held it. But that did not seem to make any difference, she did not seem even to know. "Of what are you afraid?" he said.

She said, "We are too happy."

If she had turned to him and clung to him he would have thought—what a pretty little child she was. But it was not like that.

Going away from him somehow into the white depths of the sunset, she said, "We are too happy. It is too beautiful, all of it. Too close to the edge

Hélène was Fifteen

of things. The sunset and our life. We are come too near.'"

He felt somehow as if he were losing her, though he was keeping her hand.

Hélène was Fifteen

WHEN Hélène was yet an almost little girl, she planned her life quite distinctly—never to be good, never to be kind, never to be trusting or faithful or self-sacrificing, and never, never, never to love a man.

A tall, thin, ugly little girl, with hair in thick brown plaits, she used to look at her handsome, charming father, and tell herself that, whatever happened, she would never love a man as her mother had loved him.

She was fifteen years old on the day her mother died. They had not known her mother was ill. In the morning, she, Hélène, had been a little sad, because nobody had remembered that it was her birthday. Her mother, naturally, wouldn't have thought of it. She loved Hélène's father so absorbingly, so unhappily, that she could not have much thought left for Hélène.

It was the 15th November. Hélène went out

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into the woods, in the very early morning, alone, as usual, with her dog and her gun. She was a very good shot. Her mother had never been able to bring herself to kill things. But it rather amused Hélène. She got back to the château at noon, and there was somebody's motor in the court. It was that of the doctor whom the servants had sent for, into Reims.

The Reims doctor told Hélène that it was very bad. He said her mother must have been ill for months, suffering terribly. He could not understand their not having known. He had telephoned to Paris for nurses, and for another doctor, a great man who was a specialist for that malady. But he feared it was too late. He kept always repeating, however, however in the world was it that they had not known?

Hélène knew why they had not known. There was no need of her mother's saying it. Her saying it was the first confidence she had ever given to Hélène. Her mother said to her, death, even the girl knew then, in her voice and in her face, "It would have so annoyed him."

He had gone to Paris for the day. They telephoned—her mother did not know of that, it would have worried her dreadfully—to the hôtel in the rue St. Dominique, and to his clubs and everywhere, but they could not find him.

Hélène was Fifteen

Hélène stayed all day in her mother's room. All day long her mother worried and worried for fear he should be annoyed. Not for fear of death—death was, to the woman who was dying, only a thing that might by its dark intrusion upon his bright life, annoy him. For her the thing that is the greatest thing in the world was just a thing that might annoy him. She made Hélène promise, again and again, to explain to him that she had never meant to annoy him. She had never meant that he should know. It was not her fault, truly not, and she was so sorry. The only thing she seemed to care for in Hélène's being there, was that Hélène might explain to him that it hadn't been her fault.

The other doctor and the nurses arrived by motor from Paris quite early in the afternoon. But there was no hope at all.

They got the priest; it was one of the servants who thought to send for him. Hélène's mother had always been devout, but it was not of her soul she was thinking when she died.

Hélène's father came in the late afternoon by train. He telephoned from somewhere, and they could not intercept him, that the motor was to meet him at the station.

But Hélène had to send it to Reims for things the doctor wanted. She did not care how he got

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himself up from the station. She met him at the door and told him, "Mother is dying."

He went to her room, up the cold damp old stone stairs, that she, never daring to put on a wrap, had always gone so shiveringly up and down, and along the corridor where she had never dared, without his permission, have the little oil-stoves lighted.

She was sitting up in the bed of the tapestries, the green knight and the lady with the monkey and the cat. Everything of the room seemed strange in the light of so many lamps and candles. The lamp on the night table by the bed showed the dying figure of the Christ, ivory on an ebony cross, over the top of the bed, and the bit of bone in the reliquaire under the crucifix, and the branch of palm over it, and the little silver basin of Holy-water. Hélène's mother sat up very erect in the sad old bed, her cheeks scarlet and her eyes very bright.

The priest and the doctors and nurses stood back that Hélène's father might speak to the woman who had loved him through so many things and years.

He asked her, what was all this fuss about? And why the devil hadn't they sent the motor to the station?

That was the thing that was the worst of it, that

Janet and Annaïs

the motor had not been sent to the station. That was what Hélène was always to remember about it. Life and love and death were always to mean to her that her father had had to come up from the station in a hack.

Janet and Annaïs

ONE evening Annaïs did not come down to tea, and the servants could not find her, and Philippe, her husband, was annoyed, because there were quite a lot of people come over from the Château d'Ecquin.

Janet went to fetch her. She knew where she would find her, but she did not tell the others.

The two of them had been little girls together at the convent. They had thought they were such friends that nothing could ever come between them. The marriage of Annaïs two years ago had come between them, however, for Annaïs loved her husband.

She loved him all the short little time she was to be with him. She was eighteen when they were married, and she was just more than twenty when she died.

When she died, something that was part of Janet

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died too. Something that had been very deep in her heart was torn from it, and died, and was laid away, in the dark, with Annaïs.

The husband of Annaïs had been fond of her, and good to her, and he grieved for her, but it was not he who knew death in her death. He would have been annoyed to know how Janet knew it. But he never could have known. It was a deeper thing than ever he had time for, in his passing over of life. He saw so many glittering things, that he never knew there could be things that, for their very beauty, were hidden away.

All that was most beautiful of the soul of Annaïs, since he had not troubled to see it, had come to be hidden away. She would not let even Janet see what was hidden from him.

It was that that came between them, between her and Janet, and made them both lonely.

Janet was hurt a little, that Annaïs should be gone away alone, that afternoon.

She went to fetch her.

She ran across the great hall, that was yet called the Banquet Hall, and up the steep, narrow enclosed stone stairs of the west tower to the room that she and Annaïs called the secret chamber.

It was very dark on the stairs.

The door of the secret chamber opened directly from the stairs.

Janet and Annaïs

Janet knocked, but Annaïs did not answer, and she opened the door.

For a moment she thought the room was on fire, it was so full of sunset.

It was a small, round, stone room with four tall, narrow slits of windows set deep in its ancient walls. There was never anything in the room but heaps of rough cushions on the stone floor, and books, and writing things on the floor too.

Now the room was just a stone vessel to hold the sunset. It was like a chalice holding red wine.

Annaïs stood at the west window. She stood quite still with her head thrown back and her hands clasped behind her. She must have been standing like that for quite long. She did not hear Janet at the door.

Janet said, "Annaïs, Annaïs." She had to say it several times over before Annaïs turned to her.

Annaïs' face was lighted with all the wonder of the sunset. Her eyes shone with it. It made a sort of halo about her, as she stood there.

Janet said, "There are people come to tea."

"To tea?" said Annaïs after her, as if she were trying to understand.

"Annaïs, they have all come over from the Château d'Ecquin, and Philippe wants you to come."

"Oh no, Janet."

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“Yes, yes, you must come. He is annoyed. Hurry, Annaïs.”

“But, Janet——”

“Hurry, tidy your hair.”

Suddenly it seemed to her dreadful.

To take away from this anyone who had love of it, to have it left all behind, because of people come to tea.

Janet had a sudden sense of the people, what they were, brilliant, glittering people, hard and cold and sharp. And of what they offered of life to Annaïs, things so different from this.

The thought of Annaïs taking of those other things was terrible to Janet, suddenly.

She caught Annaïs' two hands in her two hands as they stood a last instant in the tower-room, and begged her, “Annaïs, Annaïs, I know you've got to have those things in your life too, but don't ever come to love them best. Don't ever change, Annaïs. Promise me you'll never be different, that always and always you'll stay true to these things, our things, Annaïs.”

She said, “Always and always.” She wondered afterwards, however it was possible that she had not known. There was to be so little more time for Annaïs. They were so close together, and yet she had not known.

Annaïs

“You will never change?” she had begged of Annaïs, that sunset in the tower-room, and had not known.

Annaïs

THE husband of little Annaïs had been fond of her, and when she died he grieved for her, and it was three years before he married again.

Janet never had another friend like that. She kept all her memories of Annaïs, and of the little things, the least little things they had done together, treasured, always, close with her.

The laughter of Annaïs was like a child's laughter. Little dark Annaïs, with the great eyes and the curly hair, could play like a child with children. And how she could dance! And how she could run!

Janet always loved to remember her running, slim and swift.

Everything of her seemed to belong to motion. Her dark, soft, wild, curly hair belonged to the sea wind and to all things of it, waves and wings. Sometimes her great dark, wide eyes were the eyes of a child, questioning. And then sometimes they

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were the eyes of a dreamer, who looks very far beyond. And somehow she seemed to belong beyond things of the world, in far, lonely places. Her happinesses were as lonely as griefs.

Three People

ONCE she and Philippe and Janet were riding home together to the château from a paper-chase at some people's place in the woods, away inland. Janet was riding one of the polo ponies and Annaïs her own bay mare.

It was at sunset, when the marshes were full of gold and crimson, and the sea-swallows flew low over, and through the dips in the line of the sand-dunes one had glimpses of the sunset, the sunset sea and the sunset sky. It was so beautiful that it hurt one. One almost could not bear it. The beauty made one feel too desperately, one's need of happiness. It was very lonely.

Janet wanted to let her pony come close to the bay, and to put her hand out and touch Annaïs' hand, that lay holding the reins on her knee. The touch would have been very sweet. But they were not any more little convent girls together.

Annaïs Dancing

Annaïs was thinking what a beautiful thing it would be if she could ride close to Philippe and put her hand out and have his hand meet it, and they could ride like that for a moment. It would be silly. Sometimes at first she had been silly. At first she had been silly in little things like that, and had annoyed him. Now she had learned not to, any more.

He rode, not talking, rather bored by the two little convent girls, his wife and her friend. He liked brilliant women of the world, to whom one could talk brilliantly. He could have been saying clever things to some clever woman, who did not go down, under, in the depths of the beauty that was loneliness.

Annaïs Dancing

FROM her ivory room in Paris, Annaïs could step out to the garden, the gravel paths and box borders, the formal grass plots and little clipped yew trees, the basin of amber water, and the laurel mound with the old broken mossy urn on top of it. The wall that shut in the garden was very high, and tall trees stood close together against it, so that the

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garden was quite hidden from the houses about; one saw only their steep blue roofs and hooded chimneys when one looked up over the wall and through the branches. There were many birds who lived in the garden, and there was a nightingale.

He always sang there, always in the same place, where the lilac bushes were, across from Annaïs' window, under the acacias, in just the hour before dawn.

In the wonderful silence of that hour he would sing and sing. And the instant the other birds waked, the moment they began their smaller singing, he would be silent.

Annaïs never could see him. In that strange light which there is in the hour before dawn, she would watch for him; in the colourlessness and shadowlessness of things that were staying so still, she would watch to see him, where he sang alone. But she never did.

She could see every leaf and twig of his acacia against the dawn, and every blade of grass dressed in jewels, but not the nightingale.

She would be coming from dances often at that hour, and she would never want to sleep.

She would stay at her window and watch and listen. Sometimes she would go out into the garden and tiptoe over the wet grass.

The city was quite, quite silent all about the

Annaïs Dancing

garden. It was an enchanted city, asleep, under a spell. There was only the nightingale awake, singing, and Annaïs, holding her breath, lest the mood should vanish away.

In one dawn, she danced, noiselessly, over the grass, her little white satin slippers in the wet grass. And her dancing seemed to her to be part of the spell. She was dancing under a spell.

She had been dancing in a great bright, hot room, full of flowers and lovely people.

She had worn a dress of the time of the Sun King, in whose day her garden had been a great garden, covering what now were streets and avenues. Four courtiers in velvet and brocade and lace had carried her painted chaise à porteur into the ballroom, and four tiny negro pages had followed her, carrying, two of them each a live peacock,—and one peacock had spread its tail,—and two of them each a gorgeous live parrot. All the people had stood back, and the courtiers and the pages had walled in the clear space about her, and she had danced in stately measure over the wide, shining floor. Then there had come a scarlet domino with a big crystal ball in his hands. He had danced before her, holding the ball up in both hands over her head, and she had danced looking up into the ball. It had been that he was showing her her future in the crystal ball, and that it was

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his face she was to see. She had danced as if she were afraid to look, and then at last had been persuaded, and had looked, and met his eyes in it. Seeing his face in the crystal ball she had caught the ball from him and kissed it. And then she had danced away from him, holding the crystal ball against her heart, the masque and the courtiers and the little black pages following her out of the ball-room.

The whole ballroom had applauded and applauded, and when she had gone back people all had said lovely things to her.

She had come home gaily to her garden.

And she thought she was quite happy when she danced in the garden, over the dewy grass, at dawn, while the nightingale sang.

She was glad that everybody had liked her dancing.

But the man for whom she had danced had not even seen her. He had been off in one of the drawing-rooms talking to another woman. He was her husband, and she would never dare to tell him how it was for him she had danced.

The Cut Grass

The Cut Grass

IN Annaïs' city garden, the gardener was cutting the grass of the formal plots. It smelled awfully good in the noon sunshine.

Annaïs came to her window and said to the gardener, "How good it smells!"

The gardener looked at her in blank surprise.

It was when Annaïs was quite ill and not able to be much out of her room. She asked the gardener to leave a pile of the cut grass close to her window so that she could smell it in her room.

But the grass seemed to have lost all its odour.

Annaïs thought that was because the sky clouded over and there was no sun, all the rest of the day, to draw the odour out.

Next noon, the sunshine was hot and bright again, and Annaïs was able to go out for a little into the garden.

She thought that, perhaps, if she spread the cut grass from her heap of it out wide in the sunshine, the heat of the sunshine would draw out from it again the good odour of yesterday.

She took the cut grass up in handfuls, and tossed it about over the velvet of the lawns.

She made a funny little dance with it, throwing

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it about this way and that way, in the stately, formal order of the garden.

And of course it was just then that her husband came out through the salon window.

“What are you doing?” he said. “What absurd thing are you doing now?”

The Window of the Courtyard

THE window was so high that it had view—over the lower roofs on the other side of the courtyard—of the quai and the river, and the beautiful curve of the houses across on the edge of the Île St. Louis. There were four flights of stairs to climb up from the court to that room of the window.

The court was entered by an archway that had, very long ago, been built high and wide enough for pageants with torch and banner to stream through.

It was a proud court, with walls of red brick and grey stone, and sculptured doorway, and windows of carved fronton, a dragon's mouth fountain opposite the entrance, and a stair tower in one corner. It was full of poor little commerces, the mender of old chairs littered his corner with straw and wood curlings, there was a dépôt of handcarts on the left, there were copper pots and cauldrons hung out

The Window of the Courtyard

from a window carved with salamander and crescent, the cobbler had pitched his booth,—so dark that, all the winter days, a lamp would be kept burning in the depths of it,—against the curve of the stair tower. The ragged, faded laundry of the house always swung drying, on cords stretched from window to window. There were chickens pecking about the cobbles, that used to ring to the masters' spurs, and women came, in camisole, with hair tumbling across their eyes, to draw water at the dragon's mouth fountain, and crowds of noisy children played everywhere about.

The door, by which one who wanted to hide from his own life might have gone in, stood open to a wide deep stone stairway, up which lost footsteps seemed to be always echoing.

Many people lived in the house; it was full of to-day's footsteps and voices. Ragged people came to the windows and called across to one another and down to one another in the court. There were canaries in most of the windows, and they sang to the people's voices. There was a blackbird outside the door of the mender of old chairs, and it could be heard whistling above the shouts of the children at play in the straw.

The court was never quiet. In its confusion no one would ever trouble about lost footsteps, or even catch the sound of them, through the hurrying and

Accidentals

weariness, the coming and going, in and out, to and fro.

The little old poor streets of the quarter were of the most haunted streets of Paris, and of the most echoing, full of the ghosts of very old-time people, grand ghosts, of bishops and cardinals and altesses, and of the very long ago kings and queens, of courtesans, and of the nuns of the Ave Maria and the priests of St. Paul, full—for anyone who listened—through all the everyday noises, of foot-falls that had been lost there since long ago. They were most of them streets that took their names from the days of the long gone Royal Palace, the street of St. Paul, and the street of the King's Gardens, the street of his Lions, the street of the Falconer, the street of the Beautiful Trellis,—that golden trellis of Charles V.,—and the street of his Allée of Cherry Trees.

And through all those old poor streets one might go, a ghost, shabby, with muddy boots, to some work or other, that was hard and dull, that brought one out early of a morning, and kept one till late, and made one carry heavy bundles, shoulder to shoulder with real people, shabby, muddy-booted people, tired too.

In winter especially, when the wet and cold hung in the streets, and all the figures of the streets and all their noises seemed blurred and darkened,

Place du Carrousel

the passing through such ways as those, to such a place of one's own, as—it seemed—might be the room behind the window of the courtyard, would have been as kindly as the solitude of mountain tops to one who for any reason had need to hide.

Place du Carrousel

AT three o'clock one morning in winter, Claire was coming home from a dance, and her motor crossed the great open moonlit square of the Louvre, and she saw this:

There was a man sitting on one of the stone benches that there are between the street and the Arc du Triomphe du Carrousel.

He sat crouched quite over, with his knees hunched up and his arms upon them, and his head upon his arms.

She could not see if he was a young or an old man. She could not see if his clothes were fine, or of rags.

The moonlight was biting bitter white in the Place du Carrousel, and everything menaced black in it, the mass of the Louvre, the Arch, the statues and shrubbery, the man's figure, and all the shadows.

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Claire could not have told what it was about the man sitting there that so especially frightened her. So many sit through winter nights on the stone benches of Paris. He was only one of them.

But in that instant of passing she felt—perhaps he was a poet, starving. It was as if someone had pricked her heart, suddenly, with a fine dagger, and said to her, “There is a poet who is starving.” Her sense of it was so swift and sharp and perfectly clear that, before she knew, she had leaned forward and tapped on the glass to stop the car.

The footman was off the box, and had opened the door of the car.

She did not know what to say to him. She was afraid to tell him to go back to the man on the bench. She wanted to get out of the car and go herself to the man. But she was afraid. What should she say to him? What might he not answer her? She was afraid, because she was ashamed of her velvet cloak and her sables and the pearls in her hair.

The footman was looking at her, surprised, waiting for her to give some order.

She was ashamed because of the footman.

And there might be people coming up who would stare.

She said to the footman, “It is nothing, go on.”

Some years after, she read, in a book of which

Green Ribbon and Red Feather

everyone was talking, a poem that made her remember that thing very strangely.

It was a little poem, like a cry of just one of the many people who are starving. He had hunger for bread and hunger for kindness. He was without bread, without any dream, without a place to rest in. Men had driven him out, and taught him that life was bitter. He had felt the calm of the hour when men are tired with pleasure. The touch of the moonlight had been to him as a Pentecost. He had seen dawn come to the forest of shadows. He had asked that he might be forgiven because men passed and did not know.

The book in which she found the poem was that of a young man who had killed himself, thrown himself into the Seine, it was said, because he was starving.

The poem was dated, three o'clock of the morning, Place du Carrousel.

Green Ribbon and Red Feather

It was already night, winter, rain and cold, and the rue de la Paix was empty; the going to the Boulevards was not yet begun and the great shops had been shut for an hour.

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The two girls who stood together against the barred doors of a shop, that was famous even among the famous shops, must have been having a desolate long wait there.

It was a very bad night. There was a cold, wet wind that swept along the street, from the Opéra to the Place Vendôme, and set the wet of the pavements shivering in the light of the street lamps.

One of the girls stood quite motionless in the light of the street lamp, her face hard set like a pale little mask. The other was imploring something of her, with hold on her arm and face urgent. Both of them, the rigid girl with the green ribbon in her hat and the beseeching girl with the red feather, would have been tawdry enough and banal, valueless, if it had not been for something about them, of really great tragedy, that made eternal types of them; something about Green Ribbon that was ages and ages old—all the lives of all the women of the world old—in hoping, and something about Red Feather that was ages and ages old, in knowledge of hopelessness.

Red Feather was saying, "Faut que je me débène, tu sais, viens, viens, mon chou. Ecoute, mon chou, i'n'y a plus d'espoir, ce soir sera comme tous les soirs, i'n'y viendra pas davantage. Viens j'te dis." She was tugging at Green Ribbon's

Saints in a Cellar

hand. "Viens," she said, "ma vieille, faut l'avaler. Y t'a plaquée. Sont tous comme ça. Que veux-tu?"

Saints in a Cellar and a Red and Gold Cross

SISTER Thérèse du Saint Esprit let Big Marthe follow her down to the cellars, when she went to see to the furnace in the January afternoon.

Big Marthe had been at the asile of the Petites Préservées since she was ten and now she was eighteen. She had been brought there a starved, beaten, half-dead little creature, straight from a hideous thing. Her mother had been murdered, and she had seen the thing done. The man with whom her mother lived had come in crazy with absinthe. He had crashed a chair to pieces and killed the woman, beating her head with a bar of it. He had not seen the child hidden under the bed. He had sat down by the table and wept and fallen asleep. After a while, some neighbours had come. The neighbours had brought the child that night to the good little Sisters. Now she was the strongest and prettiest of all the sixty girls at the asile. But her mind had never developed. She had no more

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intelligence than a child of ten. She had known too much of horror, even more than the other little girls who were brought to the Sisters. Horror had driven something of her away ; something had been lost from her, as if a bird were gone out of a cage. She was very sweet and docile, and everyone loved her. The big girls and the little girls all were kind to her. Sister Thérèse of the Saint Esprit thought they learned how to be kind through their pity for her.

This week it was the turn of Sister Thérèse of the Saint Esprit to take the humble work of the asile, and late in the afternoon she went down to the cellars to attend to the furnace.

Big Marthe followed her, as she followed her everywhere about.

They went down the outside stairs from the garden, that was all dusty and frozen, and through the passage to the cellar.

It was almost dark out of doors and quite dark in the passage, but in the cellar there was a dim red glow from the furnace.

Sister Thérèse du Saint Esprit opened the door of the furnace and found the fire too hot. She shut the draughts and threw on some ashes. She used her hands for much work, but they had somehow always remained beautiful and fragile, not the sort of hands ever meant for tending the furnace in the

Saints in a Cellar

cellar of the asile of the Petites Préservées. She was rather afraid of the furnace, and though its red glow died down somewhat under the ashes she threw on, she said to Marthe that she would go and get the porter to help her. She had to go down through the garden to fetch him from the lodge at the gate, and she told Marthe to wait there in the cellar until she came back, because it was cold in the garden.

No one ever knew how it happened. Everyone remembered afterwards that Big Marthe had always loved the story of Sainte Jeanne d'Arc, and how she had often said that she would like to be burned at the stake like her, so that her soul might go straight to God. She had been telling some of the smaller girls only that morning how she wanted to be a saint like Jeanne d'Arc.

She must have been very quick about piling all there was of kindling wood in the middle of the cellar floor, and getting it lighted with hot coals from the furnace.

She must have been standing for two or three minutes in the midst of her burning pile. She stood with her arms stretched out. Her blue cotton apron was in flames from hem to shoulders, the flames soared up above her head, and the sleeves of it were burning along her outstretched arms. She stood perfectly motionless, not making a sound.

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Sister Thérèse, come back, saw from the cellar door a cross of red and gold flaming out of the darkness of the cellar, and Marthe upon it. For an instant she thought it was a miracle, that a great glory was shining about the girl Marthe, there in the cellar. Then suddenly she knew.

She rushed to the girl and threw her arms about her, trying to smother the flames in the wool folds of her dress. She crushed the girl against her, beating the flames with her hands. She wrapped the wide folds of her skirts around the burning cotton skirts and her full sleeves around the burning cotton sleeves. Her skirts caught fire from the pile of burning kindling wood before she could drag the girl from it. The wings of her cornette caught fire about her face.

The porter, Louis, was close behind her. He got water from the spigot—there was a pail under the spigot. He got the pail full of water and threw it upon the two burning figures. He dragged them nearer to where the water was, and threw water upon them, and more, and more, shouting all the time for help.

The Sisters came. They were wild with fright, but they fought the fire desperately, with more water and with the thick stuff of their dresses. They did not, any of them, scream, or make a sound, they had so completely the habit of silence.

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There were only two minutes, three minutes of it. Then the flames were out.

It seemed very dark in the cellar when there was no longer there the light of the red and gold cross. There was no more glow from the furnace under the ashes. The black and white figures of the Sisters moved in the gloom. Now they spoke to one another, always quietly, though the thing was so horrible. Marthe lay as if she were dead on the floor. Sister Thérèse du Saint Esprit stood against the wall. All the confusion was about Marthe. Someone brought candles and in the candle-light it was all dreadful. Marthe was beginning to be conscious and to moan.

When they had carried her away there was time to think of Sister Thérèse, who stood against the wall, not moving or speaking. They realised how strange it was that she stood like that. They begged her, "Speak to us, Sister Thérèse, you seem so strange, what is it, Sister Thérèse?"

She said, "I am blind."

In the gloom of the cellar they could not see her face.

Afterwards they all told her always, the poor little merciful Sisters, that there was no mark of burning in her face. They told her that it must have been the shock, or the glare of the flames so close to her eyes when the shoulders of Marthe's

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apron were burning, and when the edge of her cornette was burning.

Big Marthe died in the hospital after some days. She was conscious for one day, suffering terribly, and calling all the time for Sister Thérèse. They could not tell her why the Sister did not come to her. However, the last day she was radiant because she thought she was Sainte Jeanne d'Arc.

At first Sister Thérèse was unhappy, terribly, because she thought that she was of no more use among the good Sisters and the little girls they saved from cruel lives. But, after a time, they managed to make her know that she was of use just in staying among them and letting them love her.

And after a while, again, she came to be happy, the most happy of them all, for an odd reason. It was because sometimes, if she were especially tired, or a little ill, as she often was, or if it came to her to feel a little sad, she would see a cross of red and gold shining out of the darkness before her eyes.

She would speak of it sometimes to the others, and tell them she thought the sight of it was a special message of God to her. She said she did not know what it meant, but some day she would know. She thought that some day she would know, they all would know, why little creatures such as Marthe had to be born out of the misery

Breakfast

of the world. And why a high vision, a gleam of martyrdom, a glory, should have to seem only grotesque, atrocious, and absurd, and leave behind only pain.

Big Marthe had thought she would die as Jeanne d'Arc died, and be a saint like her. And Sister Thérèse of the Saint Esprit thought her God meant some special promise to her in leaving her the red and gold cross to see, when she could see no other thing.

Breakfast

THE old man and woman of the flower-stall at the angle of a street and an avenue of very grand shops and of the passing of very grand people, it being noon, were breakfasting. The day was very cold, there was a high wet wind, and they had set their table close in the shelter of the booth. The booth was radiant with winter flowers, violets and mimosa and narcissus and those little tight-shut pale yellow roses of winter streets, and there were heaps of green and copper-red foliage. The old woman had made the soup in a copper dish over a lamp, and there were also bread and cheese and white wine. The old woman was fat and ugly, and the old man

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was thin and ugly, but they ate their breakfast under the winter flowers, talking and laughing together as merrily as if they had been young and good to look at.

Clocks and the Wind

THERE was a clock in every room of the grim, old, proud house, on every splendid mantel-shelf. And all the clocks kept time exactly, to the second, together, ticking in the silent rooms. It was like the telling off by fate of minutes that counted on to death.

The ticking of the clocks had come for Veronica in the years of her marriage to be an unbearable thing. At last she could not any more bear it in the big, silent rooms.

People said that she went away with someone.

The man who had been her husband knew that there was no one.

He was very clever. He was brilliant above troubling to understand things. He would never have troubled to understand that it was because of the ticking of the clocks that his wife went away.

That night the wind was gone quite mad. It did not care how it cried its madness out, in the

The Girl Who was Hungry and the Girl Who was Tired

streets of Paris. It cried out its madness to anyone in the streets who would hear. It told its great wildness of space and freedom to the narrow confines of the streets.

The wild wind cried through the streets, in its uncounted voices. It made one think of great wild waters, and of packs of wolves, and of the dead crying. It got into carved and painted rooms and told there its secret of limitless spaces. It cried freedom through sealed places.

And to stately rooms where clocks ticked out ordered minutes, it told something that, even to one who would not listen, meant—perhaps death, perhaps life, at least a getting away.

The Girl Who was Hungry and the Girl Who was Tired

Two girls came and sat down at the next table, there on the terrace of the café on the boulevard that winter night. They were very young girls. Neither of them could have been twenty, and they were both rather pretty. They made a fine show with their little tight skirts and high heels and their absurd hats. They sat down together, and one ordered black coffee and the other cognac. They

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leaned back in their chairs and did not speak at all to one another. It was the hour of dinner. Other people in the café were eating soup and sole and cutlet and salad and tart. The girls looked at the things that people were eating.

After a while one said to the other, "I have the hunger of a wolf to-night."

The other said, "I am too tired to have any hunger."

After a while again, the girl who was hungry said, "Well, I must go on. And you?"

"I can't go on," said the tired girl—"that's all, I can't."

"Name of a dog, you'll have to," said the hungry girl, as she plumed her finery. She started out.

The tired girl sat there.

After a little the hungry girl came back. She had a man with her. She was laughing and talking. She did not look at the tired girl, and the tired girl did not expect it.

The hungry girl and the man went into the café to order dinner.

The tired girl sat for yet a while at the terrace table. And then she got up and went on also.

Neighbours

Neighbours

THE windows across the street were so near that one could look into the rooms over there and see the opposite people. There were three people, a man who never wore a coat, a woman who always wore a red flannel wrapper, and a little girl who always had a fat yellow puppy in her arms. They had a bare wooden table on which there were heaps of coloured tissue paper, and coils of wire and pots of glue, and by which the woman seemed always to be seated making gay paper flowers. Also, they had a table with a red and white cover, on which there were always standing plates and glasses; and there were pots of geraniums that bloomed cheerily in the windows; and there was a wardrobe, from which all sorts of things were always untidily overflowing, and a large grand red velvet chair, in which none of them ever sat; and they all three of them were always laughing and chattering together.

One day there was a forlorn little funeral taking place from the house of the opposite people. There was the man, scarcely to be recognised, in a black coat and black gloves and black tall shiny hat; and there was the woman, more unrecognisable still, in black crape that replaced her red flannel wrap-

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per. They came out of the house together, and quite alone, and followed behind a grand big black and white hearse, that was all plumes and black and white draping and pomp and ceremony, and that seemed a quite impossible carriage for a little girl, who always had a fat yellow puppy in her arms, to ride in. The street was alive with spring, push-carts blossoming, and caged birds singing. The big black and white hearse and the two black figures went down the street in a glory of azure and opal and gold.

The yellow puppy was whining, left behind in the room of the closed blinds, where there would be all those everyday things, the grand red velvet chair and the rest of it, for the man and woman to come back to.

The Dream

THEY had kept the thing in the dream haze as long as they could. It had been beautiful in its rainbow colours. They had wrapped it round with white samite. They had looked at it through pure crystal, not touching it at all. They had thought it was as cold and calm and pure as starlight. They had thought they bore the Host through fields of asphodel.

The Dream

Then suddenly, one day, in one instant, they knew that it was not like that at all.

There had been months in Paris when they saw one another every day. They would meet in the world, with other people moving close about them, very far off through the rainbow haze. And they would meet alone, in lonely places at lonely hours. They would walk in old, forsaken streets.

There are so many streets of Paris to which people may take things they would hide.

Down streets of convent walls and closed gardens, where church bells rang that no one listened to any more, and great doors closed in secrets, their footsteps would pass into possession of silence, away out of the world, leaving no sound or echo. And in crowded, poor streets, in the midst of noise, pushed about, jostled, elbowing, they would pass as dimly as shadows among shadows.

They had been together sometimes in the country, in places beautiful enough even for the dream, and they had thought that their love was a winged thing, belonging to dawns and fields, like the song of the larks. The wind had made organ music for it along the aisles of forests. They had seen the glory of it in sunsets down beautiful distances.

Sometimes there were weeks when they did not see one another. They had thought that they could live for the dream, that the ideal was enough.

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But one day, in Paris, in the moment of the year when the beautiful world was very gay, and they had been laughing with its music, suddenly, everything was different.

He came upon her where she stood in a sunny window, by a bowl of daffodils.

She turned, and they stood and looked at one another.

It was as if they never had known before.

He said, "And you are unhappy, like that?"

She did not answer him.

He repeated, "Are you unhappy—like that—too? I thought it was only I——"

And she said, standing there fragile and slim against the sunshine, the sunshine in her hair and her eyes full of shadow, "I would go away with you. I would have all the world know. I would have disgrace and shame. Don't you understand? I want a thing that is real even if it is pain, even if it is sin. I want to die all the deaths for you." She held her head up very high and met his eyes and said, "There, that is the dream."

As It Happened

As It Happened

CLAIRE sat in her loge at the opera, very lovely, like a fragile white orchid, and prayed, savagely hard, "God,—stop them, stop them! Make something happen, anything, to come between them, to take her from him, to send him back to me! Stop their looking at each other like that, their talking together like that, their being together, stop it, stop it!"

The music went on, and the chatter of the people in the next box, and of the people with her, and the whispering to her of the man behind her. And her prayer went on, "Make something happen, make something happen!"

In her white dress, with her white roses and her pearls and her big feather fan, she sat, exquisitely removed, it would have seemed, from all violent things, and watched him, over there across the house, with the woman, the girl, he was going to marry. She knew he loved that little young girl as he never had loved her, Claire. He had loved her, but it had been different. Now, this night at the opera, she realised, absolutely, how different it had been. She seemed to realise everything, to know and feel everything. And yet she could not think about anything at all. She could

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only pray her crazy prayer, sitting quietly there in sight of everyone.

Everyone was at the opera that night. There was an important ball afterwards, and people were going on to it. The women's dresses and jewels were more beautiful than was usual at the opera. The women in their loges were beautifully arranged for showing; an exhibition of orchids, fine rare things, result of much labour, well placed for the world to see, and yet held delicately apart from any touch of it. That night, the opera house, heaped up, curve upon curve, with colours soft in the soft light, was a background, with the music adding to its pageant, for the loveliness of orchid things like Claire.

In the midst of it, all the time, Claire was praying to any god that would listen, "Make something happen, anything, to come between them."

It seemed to her she must be crying her prayer out aloud, against the music, for everyone to hear. It seemed strange that the people were not standing up to stare at her. How could one suffer as she suffered, and people, so close about, not know? She had an odd consciousness, even then, of the loneliness of it. She wondered, even then, were any of the other women mad with pain, as she was, where they sat prettily?

She sat with her head high, her eyes wide open

As It Happened

and her hands holding the white feather fan, and prayed, as violently as if she had been a ragged woman beating her breast at a cross of the wayside, that something might happen to keep the man she loved from the woman he loved.

She prayed that something, anything, might come between them. She did not know then what thing it might be that she called for in her prayer.

And afterwards it was to seem to her that there had been warning of it, all along, in the music she scarcely listened to. She never remembered afterwards what opera it was, but through it all there had been a foreboding that she was afterwards to hear in all music. There was a march toward the end of the last act, that she thought she could not bear. It was like some bearing down upon one of fate, treading heavily, some steady tramp of fate. It meant for her, unbearably, something inevitable, relentless, drawing nearer.

Until the measure of that march trod it out, she had clung to, as she sat there, a hope that had no dignity and no right, an intense stupid unworthy hope that he might come to speak to her there in the opera box, that he might come and say just anything to her, in his quiet voice. But she gave up hope of it, to the tread of the march.

She was always to remember, ridiculously, as if in her poor tragedy no attainment of height could

Accidentals

be allowed her, how, in the midst of it, somebody in the next box leaned over and whispered to her that she was looking quite lovely.

“Shan’t we go?” she said then to the people with her in the box, “now, ahead of the crowd?”

She could not, it seemed to her, have lived through waiting in the vestibule, perhaps quite close to him and that little girl, who was less beautiful than she, Claire. It seemed to her that what she could not bear to see was the little girl’s fearlessness. The little girl was safe to love him. In the unsparing glare of the lobby, she could look up at him and not care who saw. She need not hide it. Her eyes might answer him anything he asked, fearlessly, before all people, and in the bright light.

For Claire’s love of him there had been need of darkness.

When she was alone in the motor, it seemed to her she could not bear the darkness. She was afraid of the darkness. There had been rain, the pavements were very black, the lights of the rue de la Paix were reflected in them, and in the wet black surfaces of motors and carriages passing. The wet low sky reflected the glow of the light from the under side of its infinite blackness. The Column Vendôme stood up dark out of a blur of light and of mist. The mist was thick under

As It Happened

the arcades of the rue Castiglione. The trees of the Tuileries Gardens were delicate with March budding; the freshness of them was sweet in the rue de Rivoli and the Place de la Concorde.

Claire, huddled in the corner of the motor, went on praying, "Make something happen, to take her from him, to leave him with me. Make him need me, make him need me, as I need him."

What atrocious need she had of him! She realised it terribly and quite stupidly. She knew that night the hopelessness of all the years that there would be. She felt the pain of all the years. The years pressed in, pressed down, upon her, and crushed her, hard and black, like iron and crêpe. She could not think at all. There was nothing left but pain.

Crossing the Pont de la Concorde, she tried to see the lights in the river and could not; it was as if she were gone blind. When the motor stopped in the old dark street, it was difficult for her to move.

The footman rang the bell by the great door in the wall, and one battant of the door opened. She had to step over the lower unopened part of the frame of the door. In the oval courtyard one smelled the wet earth and trees of the gardens that lay behind the old hôtel. The court was dim with mist, the cobbles were wet, but the roofs and chimneys were massed against a starry sky.

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Claire went up the five steps and in at the door.

The butler opened the door, and the old Bretonne who had been her nurse was waiting at the bottom of the stairs for her. But she was afraid, as she always was, every time she came in at the door of her home. It was a grim secret old house, things of its long past haunted it. It was full of hidden things. But that was not why she was afraid.

Annie said, "Monsieur has come in, I think he sleeps."

They went up the stairs.

They passed his door together in the close intimacy of unhappiness.

In her own room she let herself be undressed and did not talk at all. Her room was big and beautiful. The firelight was beautiful in it. There were bowls full of violets and tall vases of daffodils and narcissus. Nobody could have asked a more beautiful room to be unhappy in. All the time she went on praying.

In her kimono, huddled before the fire in a deep chair she went on praying, stupidly, quite without thought, just on and on, as if the words were a spell, as if she had grown so used to her prayer that its reiteration was become as constant as the clock's ticking in the room,—“Make something happen, make something happen. I don't even ask to keep his love any more, only that no one else

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shall have it. Make something happen, anything, to keep her from having his love. Make something happen, make something happen.”

Annie came and stood a little way off from her mistress. She was old, her hair was grey and her thin shoulders stooped. Her eyes had come to have the vague wistfulness of growing old. There was in them that look that especially belongs to the eyes of people who belong to the sea. Her people through generations had gazed out over the sea, that was their life and their death. And her blue eyes, old and wistful, had the look of seeing very far away. She seemed always to be looking beyond. She stood with her hands behind her. She said to her mistress, “Little child——” and then began to say things quickly, where she stood. She kept her hands behind her, as though she had something in them and would hide it. She rocked herself a little as she stood, backwards and forwards. She said to her mistress, “Little one, be not angry. It is because I love thee. I have done it for thee, against one who steals from thee.” She came nearer. “My little one, thou must not be angry that I know. What have I not known of thee since thou wast a child? I made thy first tiny frocks and stitched tears in the black thou didst need to wear when yet thou wast so little, and in the white dress of thy First Communion. God of gods, what tears

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I stitched, all too soon, in thy wedding dress."

She stopped for an instant. Claire sat looking at her.

The old woman went on, "I can no longer keep still while my little one has sorrow." With a sudden quick gesture she brought her hands from behind her, and showed Claire what she held in them.

It was a roughly made wax figure of a woman.

"I made it," Annic said. She came close to her mistress with it. She said, "I have not given it a name. I do not know what name to give it. I do not know what name is that of the one who stands between my mistress and all she has of happiness. But my figure has the name of that one."

She went down on her stiff old knees by the hearth, and fixed the little wax figure there.

"Annic, what are you doing?"

"Little lamb, I am doing that which my people have done through all the ages. It is a thing that I myself have seen done."

The wax figure stood quite firmly on the tiles before the fire.

The old woman, kneeling there, said, "It is a thing I saw done when I was a child. There was a woman to whom my father gave our bread. Because of that woman we often went hungry, my mother and the little sisters and I. Because of that woman he beat us, us children, and my mother.

As It Happened

My mother made a little image, like this that I have made, of wax, and in our kitchen she set it by the hearth, as I have set this, here."

She drew a long bodkin from the pocket of her apron. Claire saw the firelight glint on it.

"My mother called the little image by a name," went on Annie, "by the name of the woman who was taking her man from her. I saw her do this thing. My mother was a little, gentle, sad woman, who had never hurt any living thing. She called us, us children, to the fire, and she told us that, as the little wax figure melted away in the heat, so would melt away the life of the woman who had hurt us all, who had so cruelly hurt us all, who was taking her husband and our father from us. Who was taking all our life from us, his sin and our sorrow melting away, as that woman's life melted."

Then Annie leaned forward and stabbed the bodkin into where would have been the heart of the little wax figure. "There, it is done," she said. Without rising from her knees she leaned back swaying a little and she made the sign of the cross upon her forehead and heart, and then stayed motionless.

The fire kept up its soft sound of burning, and the clock ticked, and the sound of Paris outside, all round about, came to the room. It seemed to Claire that the sounds of the city, all the sounds

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of it, came to the room together, curiously as one sound, that was as the sound of the sea, of an unceasing, never-resting sea.

“The sounding of the sea was very loud that night,” said Annic, strangely, as if following her thoughts. “I remember that it seemed to me, even as a child, I never had heard it so loud. It was as if the sea were bearing in upon our house. Ours was the last house on the quay. All the storms of the sea beat upon it. It is as if I hear it now, that sounding of the sea. My eyes watch yet my mother, where she knelt the night through, while the sea sounded, and my little sisters, on the bench, the three of them, nodding, poor sleepy little things, who, though they did not understand, must watch the night out. I can see their shadows nodding upon the floor behind them. I can see my father’s fish nets spread to dry, the tall old black presses against the wall, the copper pots, the statue of Our Lady on the shelf, and the patches of damp stain on the walls, and the shadows of the firelight moving through the little room.”

It seemed to Claire that she could see it too. And, as if she were in that room, she had a feeling of strangeness; something unknown was there, and she was afraid of it, by the stone hearth of the fisherman’s cabin, or by her own hearth.

Annic went on, “Our table was laid for supper.

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There was a bowl of broth and the loaf all ready, but my mother would not let us eat until the thing was done. My smallest sister cried because she smelled the broth and there were cloves in it. But we who understood, we older ones, we did not cry." She got up from her knees, and stood looking down at the figure on the hearth. She looked down at it, with strange sea eyes. Then she said, "My lamb, there is nothing to do, there is not even to say the name. There is only that the figure on the hearth with the bodkin stuck in it, will melt away with the fire's heat."

"But your mother had something of right," said Claire stupidly. "He was her man, she had a right. If it had been just the man she loved without a right to love——"

That was what she kept thinking all the night through. "The fisherwoman had a right, she had a right. And I, I have no right."

Sometimes she told herself how absurd it all was, what utter, arrant nonsense. And then again she would find herself thinking, "That woman had a right." And then she would be thinking how all that, all of a thing's being right or being wrong, was only just as it happened, how all the things of life were only just as they, by whatever chance it might be, senselessly happened. She told herself that she left the little wax figure melting by the

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hearth because it would have been too absurd to bother about it, even to take it away. And then again she would tell herself in the queer stupidity of her unhappiness, that she had a right to leave it there, quite as if the whole thing were not absurd.

All night through, before the fire, the little wax figure melted slowly, slowly. The fire burned the whole night through. Annic came twice to put logs on it, and the whole night through the little wax figure with the bodkin stuck through it melted down and down, dripping and dripping, slowly. The sound of the city outside kept always on and on, like the unceasing sound of the sea, about the house, low and monotonous and inevitable. It seemed to Claire that, if she should go to the window and draw the curtains, she would look out to some wild, dark waste of waters, catch a white glint of foam, a white rift of clouds. It even seemed to her that her window would not be the window that she knew, but a window set low over a cobbled quai where the water lodged in pools, and that it would look to a tilt of masts beyond the sea-wall. It seemed to her that in the room there was a smell of salt and sea wind, and of fish, and tar, and of the nets drying. It seemed to her that things of times far away and long past were present in the room. Only towards dawn she thought of the sound as

As It Happened

being the sound of the city, and she thought then that it was sadder than ever could be any sound of the sea. It meant much weariness.

Early, Annic came and opened the blinds wide, and the day was there, as dreadful as the day before, and as the next day would be, and all the days.

Annic brought coffee and built up the fire and scraped away the wax that was a little melted lump on the hearth, and took the bodkin, and did not say anything.

Claire felt dull and stupid, as if none of it had really been. She realised then that she had been sitting up all night, but it had not mattered. What was the use of sleeping? One would have only to wake afterwards.

She could not drink her coffee. Annic did not speak to her, but went out and left her alone again, with the morning grey in the room.

She had a feeling that some strange thing had happened. But she did not know that anything had happened, until, oddly enough, it was her husband who told her.

He came to her room to tell her. It was about noon then.

He said, "Horrid thing that was last night. Don't you know? Thought you kept up with

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everything that concerned him. Last night, coming home from the opera, that little girl he was to have married, you know, was killed, an accident, the motor, the streets were wet."

The Violin in the Crowd

IN the soft June night, in the gay restaurant of the woods on the edge of the city, the music of the violin seemed unbearably sad.

The little white supper-tables of the restaurant were arranged outside in the garden, where the light of the electric lamps, big and round as moons, was almost beautiful and almost mysterious. The fragrance of the flowers of the garden-beds was close about the fragrances of the women's lovely dresses, and blossoms of acacia came drifting slowly down into goblets of champagne. All the people were gay, talking and laughing.

The music of the violin was the more sad because it was gay music, dance music that was as sad as any music of death, *De Profundis* or *Dies Iræ*.

The violin was not an old violin; the sadness of time was not in its depths. It was not that it was giving out again the sadness of ages of melodies that had passed over its strings. It was not

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that ages of sadness had left in it their echo, like the sounding of storms in a sea-shell.

The player of it, standing a little apart from the others of the orchestra, was young and successful. One could not tell at all what it was of his playing that was so sad, in the white shining of the electric moons, and among the June colours.

Perhaps the voice of the violin was the sadder for that—that one could not tell why it was sad; that perhaps no one, of all the people there in the crowd, knew how sad it was.

Buying a Hat

THEY were passing through Paris, and had just the day there on the way from the château to Deauville, where they always went for the month of August. Tibi's mother had not time to go with her about the hat, and had told her she might go with Fräulein and choose it herself. They were to go to one of the big milliners in the rue de la Paix, for it was to be Tibi's best hat, and she was now nearly sixteen.

It was noon, and very hot in the rue de la Paix. How hot and stuffy Fräulein's feather boa looked. The glare of the sunshine was red in the gilt let-

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tering over the doors of shops, and the heat throbbed and quivered all along the street, from the Place Vendôme to the Opéra. The street was empty. There was only a fiacre drawn up at the curb near a lamp-post, the driver nowhere about, the horse with crooked knees and hanging head.

Tibi was a shy little girl, and she was afraid of Fräulein. If she had not been afraid of Fräulein she might have done something about the thing that happened that day when she went to buy a hat, and it might have made a difference. She never knew. But Fräulein was young and pretty, and Tibi's father made much of her, and so she made much of Tibi's mother, and so Tibi's mother did what she wanted, and Tibi had to also.

The heat had got into the milliner's shop; the white panels and long gold mirrors and the big crystal chandeliers reflected the glare of the mid-summer noon. There were not many hats on the tall stands, the chairs and tables were carelessly pushed back against the walls, and there were only a few knots of velvet and ribbon and sprays of imitation flowers lying about on the tables. There was one broad band of imitation diamonds that shone red in the heat.

A woman who sat writing at a table near the door got up as Tibi and Fräulein came in. She was a tall, thin woman in a long, black dress that

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would have been smart if it had not been so carelessly put on. Her face was carelessly painted. Her hair had been blonded, but was darkening again. She looked at pretty little plump pink-and-white Fräulein in the feather boa, and then at Tibi, and said, "Mademoiselle desires——"

"A white hat," said Tibi, "big, with ribbons on it."

"I have quite what you want, Mademoiselle," said the woman, "but it is in the workroom. One moment, Mademoiselle."

Tibi sat down in the only chair about, the one by the table where the woman had been sitting. The pen stood up as the woman had left it, in the ink-bottle, and the interrupted letter lay open.

Until Tibi had read the words scrawled big and black at the top of the page she did not even know she was looking at it. "I have suffered until I can suffer no more. I cannot bear it any longer. When you get this I shall be dead."

"Something fluffy and soft," said the woman, coming back. "These two are of the most chic, Mademoiselle." She came across the red carpet, holding out the hats one in each hand.

Tibi had not moved. The woman stopped half-way across the room and stood quite still. Tibi knew that the woman knew that she had seen. Fräulein came to them, and began to say some-

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thing. Tibi and the woman stayed like that, where they were, looking at each other.

It seemed a long time. A fly somewhere in the heat kept up an intolerable buzzing. Fräulein went on always talking. It was Tibi who moved first.

It was as if something broke, suddenly, and she could move. She started up and went to the woman quickly. She was going to say something. Her two hands went out, as if they were saying it for her already.

The woman moved too, but only to draw back a little from Tibi, and to hold her head up very high. She was very tall. She stood tall above little Fräulein. Something about her made it impossible for Tibi to speak.

It was the woman who spoke. Her eyes looked down straight into Tibi's. She said, "Either of these hats I am sure will become Mademoiselle to a marvel."

Fräulein said it must be the flat one with the cherries.

Tibi could not speak at all.

The woman said, "Come to the mirror, Mademoiselle, and let us try them on."

She made Tibi come to the mirror and sit down before it. She took the pins out of her hat and took it off, and patted her curls, and tried the hats one after the other.

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Tibi did not see either of them.

Fräulein talked about them with the woman of the shop, and they decided something, and Fräulein gave the address to the woman, who wrote it down and thanked them.

She went with them to the door saying that it was terribly hot. She opened the door. The white glare of the street came in, and the strange quiet.

Tibi looked up at the woman of the shop, and the woman of the shop looked down at Tibi, and said, "I hope Mademoiselle will be satisfied with the hats."

She stood holding the door open.

When Tibi was again in Paris, only in the late winter, it was still some time before she could find an excuse for going to the shop. Then the woman was not there. Tibi asked for her, the tall woman with the yellow hair and black eyes. But no one in the shop seemed to know anything about her.

It was always to be to Tibi rather dreadful to remember the polite, smiling face of the woman, as she had held open for her and Fräulein the door into the white, hot street, and how she had gone out, not knowing what to do.

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Secret

THEY had been happy from the first of the year until the end of July. Afterwards she knew that that was very long for happiness to have lasted. One winter day in the great house of her husband's people, where she had so long been lonely, it had come to her and to the man who loved her to know they could not help it, there was nothing they could do. So they had taken happiness all the way along, through the days and hours until that last afternoon.

The secret old streets they had come to know so well were full of summer, red sunset and swallows and odours of acacia. The room over the desolate garden was hot and full of the red sunset. There was a floor of worn, uneven, red brick tiles, and the painted walls were stained and faded. It was a desolate old room, like the garden it looked over and the street by which one came to it. It was all secret and hopeless, as are so many streets and gardens and rooms and sacred things of Paris.

They came to it for the last time. She was always to remember. It was in the midst of the late, long, midsummer sunset. The happiness had come to its end.

It was all over. He was going away. His life

Secret

was taking him away from her. Far away in his life he might be able to forget that room. She must go on living near it, and never seeing it, and always thinking of it.

Poor little room, how tragically much it had held of happiness.

They did not open the blinds. They could not have borne to see for the last time the shabby little detail of the room.

The swallows cried past the windows. The garden smelled sick in the heat.

It was a quarter of Paris where there used to be many convents, and church bells ring desolately.

They were ringing the Angelus of sunset in deadly monotone. The man and the woman listened for the last time together.

It was the end. And at the end they knew how happy they had been, and how long a time it was for happiness to have lasted, and how far more happy than other happinesses, is that which is snatched back, red, from the teeth of pain.

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The Stars for the First Time

PHILIP must have been about four years old when he saw the stars for the first time. He had been asleep always before there were any stars, and nobody had ever told him anything about them. He knew night only in rooms with curtains drawn.

He never in all his life forgot that first time he saw the stars.

It was in Paris. His father was taking him to see someone who was dying. It was a thick, hot night of midsummer. He never knew how they had happened to be in Paris in midsummer. He never remembered at all who it was that his father had taken him to see. Most probably it had been one of the old French aunts, his father's aunts. It was the aunts who had left his father the money that afterwards was his, and he thought, remembering, that that would have explained his being taken out so late in the summer night.

That the person he was taken to see was dying came afterwards in his memory of it, to be wonderfully a part of the heat and dark, of the soft, dense pressure of the night down upon all things, and of the strangeness of the lighted city, wrapped closely round in the night, and with such utter depth of

The Stars for the First Time

night beyond, and the stars, so far away, and so near.

At first he did not see the stars at all, because of the city lights. The city was so wonderful with its lamps all lighted, and its windows, and its traffic, the dragon eyes of cabs, the fireflies of cigarettes, that he felt those things only.

It was before motors came to Paris, and they, his father and he, went in an open fiacre. It was a yellow basket fiacre, and the horse, that was grey, had bells on his collar. The little bells sang, and the driver's whip sang, and the wheels of the fiacre sang, and all the streets and all the city sang, in the soft, thick, hot dark.

The Champs Elysées, where his nurse had taken him to see Guignol and buy sucre d'orge, would always afterwards be a place where he must tip-toe, breathlessly, seeking again the marvel of that night. The Place de la Concorde would always be a great oval lake of light, that he had nearly been drowned in. The Pont de la Concorde hung in the blue night over the river road that fairies travelled.

But it was when they turned into an old, dark, narrow, empty, silent street that Philip for the first time saw the stars. And then he forgot all the city's lights.

Over the dark, round roofs, the stars hung, golden

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in the blue night; big and near, some of them, like the lamps of the nursery in the country; and some of them far away, like the altar candles of nurse's church; and some of them like gold dust, like the dust of roads in the country when sunset lights were on it,—only wonderful—powdering trails across the dark. The little boy in the fiacre saw paths of stars, star-dusty, leading straight away from the top of the street, on and on. He knew afterwards how far the star paths led, farther on than the end of dreams, farther on than the dead go in their starry dresses. And it was to seem to him always, that he had seen the whole way marked out with stars that night. It was as marking out roads the streets led to, that he was to think of the stars always from that first time he saw them, as he drove with his father in a yellow basket fiacre through the streets to a house where there was Death.

Bridge of the Tournelle

THERE was a hearse standing at the door of the Morgue. There was no carriage to follow it, and there was no mourner. Two men carried a black box out from the Morgue, and the driver of the

Bridge of the Tournelle

hearse helped them to put it into the hearse. Some people passing had stopped to look, and some people had come over from the little garden behind the church to stand looking also. None of them knew anything about the person, man or woman, young or old, found dead, who was in the black box.

A motor passed just as the hearse was driving off. There were a man and a woman in the motor. They both looked at the hearse with the black box in it. The man went on with what he had been saying. It was some quite commonplace courteous thing that he was saying. He thought he was being very good to the woman because he was taking the trouble to talk to her. She leaned back in her corner of the motor as they went on across the bridge. She was thinking that if it were not that she was such a coward it might have been she who lay in the black box which was being taken away from the Morgue. She was thinking, "If I were not such a coward, I should not be carrying my dead heart like this about, through the days and the years." And the man knew no more of her, as she sat there close beside him, than the people gaping on the curbstone knew of the one found dead who was being taken away in the black box.

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The Pet Name

HE never showed, even to himself, how much he cared, until one day, so long after her death that he could think of her, he happened on a pair of little half-worn gloves, fragrant of the orris she had used, lying where she must have tossed them down some time among the books and papers of the learned disorder of his study. Then, because suddenly she seemed so near and so alive, so actual a presence in the room, he called her by the absurd little pet name that she had loved, and that he had rarely used.

Little Girl in Black

HER father had died when she was a child in America, in a house with a white columned portico in a street lined with elms.

She remembered how the house had smelled of beeswax and pot-pourri, how the attic had hummed with wasps, and how one could slide down the banisters of the broad, shining stairs. She remembered the nursery to which her father used to come to stand before the fire if it were winter or by the

Terry

wide window if it were summer, and look down, laughing at her.

She had no faintest memory of her father, of his face or his voice, and yet she would always see, so plainly, the paper dolls he had drawn for her, the little boats he had made out of walnut shells, the dog's head on the handle of his cane.

She could remember of that day no sorrow, but, so well, the smell of white and purple flowers through all the house, the opening and closing of doors, whispering, strangers in black on the stairs, her new black dress that was stiff and smelled black, and the sun motes, between the slats of closed blinds, dancing in the golden ladder down the dusk of his silent room.

Terry

THE only time ever Terry saw Madame de St. Aure was the day someone dressed him in white satin things that he hated, and sent him with someone who talked the English he had almost forgotten, to a big house of big rooms where there were many people, and where there was his mother; and where there was the Duc de Vérélac whom, it appeared, his mother had married that morning; and where there was a little girl named Jacqueline,

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who had a white lace dress and long black hair and long black legs.

He hated it because all the people stared so at him.

They did not stare in that way at Jacqueline. She said it was because they, all of them, knew all about her, while none of them had ever seen him before, and he was now to be the son of the Duc de Vérélac. She thought he ought to be pleased about that.

But he was not pleased. He was a very shy little boy. He had seen a great many people in his ten years of life in big hotels, and they had always stared at him because of his mother, who required for all her possessions a great deal of staring at. He was used to strangers, and to the feeling of being an object of curiosity, and to a vague feeling that something was always wrong. But it had never made him so wretched as on that day.

He tried to hold up his head and to look back at people who looked at him.

One of the people was Madame de St. Aure.

She did not look at him as the others did. It was in a quite different way.

Afterwards, long after Madame de St. Aure was dead from just having neglected a cold, Terry came to understand what the difference had been.

One of Two Women

It was that the eyes of Madame de St. Aure were sad. They were terribly unhappy eyes, as they looked at him, a most unhappy little boy, going about with Jacqueline.

It was as if Madame de St. Aure, there among all the people, had said to him, "You are unhappy, and I am unhappy too." It was as if she had put her arms around him and kissed him.

She looked at him, and then he did not feel friendless any more.

Jacquelin said, whispering, "You know she is the great love of your new papa. He could not marry her because of her other husband." Jacqueline was twelve years old. "Monsieur de St. Aure is very bad," she said; "nobody wonders that she hates him and loves your new papa. They say that very likely she will kill herself, now that her lover has married. I would not kill myself for anything, would you?"

One of Two Women

If only she could have looked at it from the conventional standpoint, and felt herself outraged, cared for the insult, imagined nothing but that all the right was on her side, and that it was for her,

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as a matter of course, to draw her skirts back, clear of the whole thing, and have no more thought for him—how simple it would have been. But what made it so terribly hard for her was that she understood.

No woman ever ought to understand. One cannot understand and be happy. Because if one understands, one cannot ever blame, or have pride. There can be no sense of dignity and no care for humiliation, and there can be no anger at all, if one understands. All small things are lost in one great thing.

She understood how it had been coming about through the years—the fifteen years since their marriage,—slowly with the passing of all the moments and the days. It seemed to her, when the crisis came, that she had felt it coming, its shadow cast before, all the way along; and that all the way she had been going to meet it, and preparing herself for it. When the crisis came, it seemed curiously familiar to her, as if she had gone through it all often and often, really, before, and knew just what she had to do and just how she was to do it. Nothing of it came from books to her, or from what people had told her, or from any thought of what people would say, any care for standard or tradition. There was no help for her in it, because she understood.

One of Two Women

And because she understood she could not stop loving him. She envied women who can proudly condemn and stop loving. With the years, her love for him had gone beyond the love of a woman for the man who is her happiness, and had come to be the love of one who cares, before all else, for the other's happiness. She cared for his happiness so much that she had come to understand how, perhaps, it might be away from her.

And something of her that was free, that soared, that he had never possessed, or even known of, that had kept her apart even from him, and lonely always, made her wonder, now, in the crisis of three lives, if it might not be that it was the other woman who best could make him happy. Perhaps the other woman had not got the bird in her heart,—the blue bird, or the black bird, that soared away into skies of sunshine and into storms,—and so could be completely his.

Perhaps that was what he wanted of a woman, that she should be completely his, having no bird to fly out of her heart and far from him. "*La cage est à vous, mais l'oiseau n'est à personne.*" Perhaps he had been lonely too. Perhaps he had been lonely with her because there was something of her that could not belong to anyone.

It seemed to her, when the end came, that she had known all along wherein the fault was hers,

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and had not been able to help it. She had loved him with the passion of tenderness and the passion of loyalty and the passion of defence. She would have followed him into exile, and been proud of allegiance had all the world abandoned him. But she had not been able to give him the bird of her heart. She had always wanted to give the bird to him, and had tried, but could not. And so she was sorry, and ashamed, and could have no anger against him.

Perhaps it was the other woman who could make him happiest, but she, just because her soul belonged to nobody, would always have to go on loving him, and understanding as he did not understand.

To a Certain Little Girl

THERE was a woman who was glad she had no child. Life had never been so kind to her that she would have wanted it for another.

One day when the child of a woman who was her friend was ill, she happened to go into the little sick girl's room.

The little girl's gold hair had been cut off roughly, cropped close to her head. In the fever

A Jealousy

it had bothered her. Her blue eyes were dull, and stained around with weariness after the fever, and her baby mouth was twisted and drawn into lines of pain. She was not beautiful any more.

When the little girl had been beautiful, the woman who had no little girl had never in the least envied her friend possession of her.

But that day she was envious, terribly.

A Jealousy

SHE had never been jealous of his wife—he had been hers, her own, so absolutely, all the years. Once she had pitied the woman who had not his love, and then had quite forgotten her, as she came to forget all things he did not think of. He loved her, who had been the loved of many men; and she, who had loved no other, loved him. And that was all. For ten years he and she were happy in every hour that they had together. She lived for those hours. The rest of the time was just a happy waiting for him to come.

Then, three days ago, she had waited, and he had not come. She had thought only that something had detained him. She had slept that June night. What a thing to remember, that she had slept that

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night—what a hideous thing. In the sunshiny morning it was in the papers that he was dead.

There was nothing she could do. Suddenly she, who had been everything to him, could be nothing to him.

It was as if she—who had known him, all the best of him, as no one of his world had—had never been known by him.

Suddenly he was no more hers. She could not even know.

Perhaps the woman he did not love had been with him when he died. Perhaps he had had some last word or look or touch for her.

Perhaps she, his wife, had loved him—she also.

Suddenly it came to his mistress that his wife also might have loved him.

He had not loved her; but she might have loved him.

Whether or not she had loved him, in life he had not been hers; and yet in death he was hers, and there was no question of it. For her, his wife, surely, if she chose, there was the doing of all the last things, that are so terrible and so sacred, and that one would put all one's hopelessness and all one's hope into the doing of.

It was she, the woman he had not loved, his wife, who could be with him now. Now he was hers.

A Jealousy

Now he was hers alone. She was with him surely, in the room, where the woman he had loved might not come. She would be with him, closest to him, in the church of Our Lady of Victories, where the woman he had loved might not come. She would journey with him through the young summer country that he was not seeing, tilled field and pasture and forest, river sunk in osier, long roads poplar-bordered. She would come to the house of his people, with him, for the last and endless time. She would be with him when they laid him in the last place of his people, where the woman he had loved might not come.

She would see, and have right to see it, the place where they left him. She would know how it looked, that place where he would stay so long.

She could go back there when she chose—if ever she chose.

It seemed to the woman he had loved, that all the comfort of life would be in the being allowed to go to that strange chamber where he waited, to feel oneself somehow a little nearer there to him than in the utter emptiness elsewhere of the world—there, where she, the woman he had loved, might not come.

And the thing that was terrible, to the edge of bearing, was that, one day, by and by, the woman to whom he had so little belonged in the time of

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his living would be carried there, and laid beside him, in the place of his people, to be with him through all that time of death, which is so much longer than life, while the woman he had loved must be alone, lying, she did not know where.

The Graveyard over the Race Track

IN the little, old, abandoned cemetery of the Abbaye of Longchamp, close above the race track, there was always a great peace, walled in. The graveyard always was utterly quiet, with its grass grown tall over the tombs, and its vines tangled about them, and its trees almost hiding their crumbling, grey, old, moss-stained stones. Down at the bottom of the graveyard, by the wall, close over the race track, where the soldiers of '70 are buried, nameless, and with one big mound to cover them, there was always a strange mood waiting for one.

In it, it seemed as if the thing most worth while about life was the dying a good death.

Always there, by the soldiers' grave, however gay and crowded the race track might be on its famous days, there was a great silence—the peace of death, and its very good forgetting.

Always one who went in, by the gate in the yellow wall, to the uncared-for little wilderness of

The Big One and the P'tiot of Ivonne

growing green things, and stone and iron things, of acacia and lilac and wistaria and crosses and little, broken, fallen, marble houses, felt a curious wonder at the race track, down under the wall, at its crowds and its renown and its importance,—a curious pity for its bravery.

The Big One and the P'tiot of Ivonne

IVONNE came to work by the day at the château. She was thirteen years old, a very earnest little girl. Her father was dead; he had been killed three years before by a falling of stone in the quarries, down under the hill, and her mother had been ill ever since the baby was born, the day its father died. There were four little brothers and sisters between Ivonne and the baby. It was not easy even for an earnest little girl to take care of a sick woman and four babies. The neighbours helped, and they had something from the Mairie, and they managed after a fashion.

The village was quite a large, prosperous village in the golden valley, and it took thought quite well for its poor.

But it meant a great deal when Ivonne got work at the château.

The château people were strangers. When

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Madame la Comtesse went away she had cried very much, because no people but hers had lived in the château since so long, and she told the village people that the strangers would be good to them, and that they must learn to love and trust them as they always had loved and trusted the "family" of the château.

The strangers were good, as far as they knew how to be, to the village people.

The village, at the end of the long avenue of lime trees, was a gentle, sleepy, yellow-brown place, with cobbled streets, all tumbling down the hillside and to the woods and the river.

The guardian's house at the gate was built in what had been the ancient pigeon tower, so it was a round, tall house, with a high-peaked blue roof.

The guardian's wife was young and pretty.

Ivonne loved her. When she came to the château at six o'clock of the morning to light the cook's fire, and when she left it at ten of the night, having washed the servants' dinner dishes, she would always stop at the guardian's house to talk for a minute with Madame Pierre.

One afternoon the butler had asked her to run down to the post, in the Street of the Marble Quarries, and change a fifty-franc note for him.

As she came back she stopped at the guardian's house to show the gold pieces to Madame Pierre.

The Big One and the P'tiot of Ivonne

"You know," she said, "at the end of the month I will have for myself one big one like that,"—she held it in the grimy little brown palm of her left hand and pointed with her right forefinger to one of the two pieces of twenty francs,—"and a little one like that," touching the ten-franc piece adoringly, for it was that one she liked best, it was so shining—"Un p'tiot comme ça."

She would have it, she told Madame Pierre, at the end of the month.

But when the end of that month, that July, came, there was no gold to be had.

The strangers were fleeing from the château that they had no roots of tradition and race and faith in, and there was only paper money for paying Ivonne.

They paid her five times her wages, and would have wondered, if they had known of it, why a little girl, through many days to come of terror—when destruction wasted at noonday the land of bright river and golden harvest fields, when the château was a heap of ruins, and the village, fought over, and again and again fought over, a place of slaughter—should be such a childish little girl as to mourn the gold shining of the big one and the p'tiot.

Accidentals

The Kitchen Garden

THROUGH all that strange summer the kitchen garden was full of the iris that is the symbol of France. The iris grew tall, purple and white against the almost golden, sun-soaked, old stone walls of the garden, and made proud, fragrant walls of its own along all the paths, up and down, behind the box edges. The garden beds were full of homely things—lettuce and spinach and asparagus and oseille, beans and peas standing up tall, raspberries and strawberries fragrant in the sun. Quantities of cuttings and bulbs and seed things, being raised and nursed for the château, were set out for shade or sunshine, as they needed, in rows of beautifully old, dull-red, earthen pots. The fruit trees trained against the wall traced lovely patterns on it, and the shadows of the grape vines were lovely on the old mossy stones of the pergola floor.

One came to the potager by a long quite straight path through the grove of beeches, where there were always silvery lights and shadows, and where there seemed to be always a little soft whispering of wind. If one turned at the gate of the potager and looked back along the path, one seemed always to see sunshine on the steps of the terrace at the

The Kitchen Garden

end, so golden was the old stone, and on the beautiful balustrade, where heliotrope and begonia climbed, and the peacocks spread their tails.

The gardener's house, just inside the gate, was a very old house with beautifully worn tile roofs and stained walls, and exquisite travel of moss and vine upon it. The two steps down from it into the garden were worn all soft and mellow, and were stained with moss.

In that summer, when the garden was especially full of purple iris, the mother of Seguin, the gardener, would sit the days through at the door of the house, waiting for something that was to happen. The oldest child of the gardener would come out to sit on the step beside her. Margot was a very busy little girl, who helped her mother in the house, and had a little brother and sister to take care of, but that summer she found much time to sit on the doorstep beside her grandmother in the sunshine, waiting for the something which was to happen.

It would be wonderfully still in the garden. The old woman and the little girl would sit so still that the lithe, quick, gold-eyed lizards, and the crickets with exquisite little black and gold Japanese designs on their backs, stayed motionless there too on the doorstep in the sunshine.

The gardener and the garden boy would be

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going about their work, and the sounds of their work, of the spade in the earth and the rake, and the knife on the twig, were part of the stillness, acutely; and their voices, as they called to one another, seemed to deepen the hush that was laid, heavy and thick, upon the garden.

The yellow dog, stretched to a surprising length on the doorstep, would sleep all the day, for he was a very old yellow dog.

Margot would be sitting with her doll in her arms. The doll was named sometimes Mélusine, because of the fairy, and sometimes Jeanne, because of Sainte Jeanne d'Arc, whom Margot loved.

One day, it was the 31st of July, 1914—the Friday—Margot, rocking the doll Sainte Jeanne d'Arc, was all day repeating over the canticles she was to sing on Sunday in church before all the world and the family from the château, at the grand fête for benediction of the harvest. “*Merci, mon Dieu, c'est pour notre récolte que nous vous prions au pied de cet autel—nos prés, nos champs——*”

The harvest was golden in the fields of the valley. The especially red, strange sunshine of that summer found reflection in the burnished gold of the fields, as if in a mirror, almost. The strange red sunsets seemed to fill the world with blood.

“*Nos prés, nos champs,*” sang little Margot in

The Kitchen Garden

the kitchen garden that last sunset. The grandmother beside her sat nodding, and kept murmuring after her, as if the words had great importance, "Nos prés, nos champs."

Neither of them understood what it was that the men of the village talked of, gathering in groups in the market-place. It was five days since, on the Sunday, Louis Créty had sold every one of the Paris papers by the time Mass was over. Wars and rumours of war, and nation to rise against nation, but what did these things mean to an old woman and a little girl with a doll in a kitchen garden?

The sunset shone red on the little polished backs of the crickets and in the water of the fountain, that was drifted over with the white duck's feathers.

At dusk the mother of Margot came to stand in the doorway. She had the smallest baby in her arms. She did not talk, as she usually did, with Margot or the old grandmother.

When her husband came up from the garden and stopped, lounging with his pipe in the doorway, she moved over so close to him that their elbows touched as they stood.

She said, "They took note of everything, the château motors, our horses, the number of guns, the men's names?"

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He said, "Yes, dear."

Margot had never heard him call her mother "dear" before.

That night there came through the village one who read the proclamation of war. He went about the village with a lantern, reading out, in a voice like the curé's voice chanting in church, things that at the time seemed unreal.

Margot, in the warm, soft night on the doorstep, was still going over her canticle, "Nos prés, nos champs."

The gardener went down to the village to follow the herald who was reading his exhortation to war. His old mother sat mumbling in her place at the door. His wife stood at the door and listened to the night voices of the garden, and to the voice of the herald, crying of war, up and down the village street under the garden walls, and to the voice of her little eldest daughter repeating over her canticle for Sunday. The nightingale of the rose garden was singing, and the incense of the garden was as a lifting up of hands at evening sacrifice; the old yellow dog on the doorstep thumped the floor with a contented tail.

Margot sang about the fields and the harvest and the altar. She thought she was to wear her new white dress on Sunday and sing her songs proudly

Girl Drinking Tears

in the church before all the world and the family from the château. She thought the harvest was to be of golden grain, and that God would bless it.

Girl Drinking Tears

Early August, 1914. When she wanted to cry, in those days of his leaving, she learned that if she held her head up very high the tears that were in her eyes, but that she must not let fall, would flow back; she would feel them hot in her throat, and she would drink them. How they hurt in her throat! They hurt in her eyes. She would open her eyes very wide and the tears would scald them, but not fall. The tears scalded her eyes and her throat as she drank them. When they dined together that last time, she would take up her glass and let the water, that was cool and sweet, drown down the hot and bitter tears as they choked her, scalding her throat. She could open her eyes very wide, staring, stupid, wide, over the rim of her glass, that he might not have to grieve because of tears in them. Because she understood war as he could not understand it.

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Girl with Handbag

Deuxième jour de la mobilisation. It was in those days that the last classes went, the young men and boys. They went off laughing, "Aller et retour pour Berlin." They had, most of them, to walk to the railway stations, because motors and buses and carts and taxi-cabs all belonged to the war.

The streets were full of boys carrying bundles. The women were helping them. None of the women cried as they helped their boys off. One saw them laughing over the joke of it. They laughed as they helped with the bundles.

How lovely Paris was in the soft, veiled sunshine, and how its women laughed as they helped their boys go off to the war.

But as they came home from seeing their boys off, they no more laughed.

Claude especially remembered a woman coming home in the late afternoon along the Cours de la Reine, a young woman, crying and crying. The tears streamed down her young face. Her face was pretty, but she had no thought of wiping away the tears that streamed down. She walked blindly,

Leur fils André

straight ahead. Claude told me that she carried a little black handbag, and that she swung it as she walked. Her arm along her side swung and swung the little black bag. I do not know why it was especially sad, her swinging and swinging of the little black bag, as she walked and cried.

Leur fils André

THEY were terribly happy. She knew that such happiness as theirs was a terrible thing. Sometimes it seemed to her that she could not bear it.

Once she said to him, "Something will have to happen."

They were walking in the soft June twilight along the Boulevard Montparnasse.

When he got home from his work at the bank he would always make her come out and walk a little. She would have been all the day at the shady window that looked on the Square du Croisic, dreaming, and making things for their son André. Their son André was to be born after the middle of July. His coming was to make their happiness a thing high beyond all touch of thought.

That night, as she walked with Xavier in the

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twilight along the Boulevard Montparnasse, she was looking up to a happiness so high that clouds hid it, and she felt it could not be.

She said, "Something will have to happen," and then wished she had not said it, Xavier's tired, happy eyes filled suddenly with such pain and fear.

"Oh, I just mean that the world will come to an end," she said, laughing, "that it will all have to float off into rainbows and become part of heaven, because, lovely as it is, it is not lovely enough to hold our son André."

She slipped her hand through Xavier's arm and they laughed together, and went to Lavenue's and had each a green menthe in the twilight at a terrace table, while the lamps of Paris shone out.

She was to remember that green menthe always and always. They had been so happy as they sipped it.

That was the 15th of June. She was always to remember the date, because it was the day after that that he began his pilgrimage to the church of Notre Dame des Victoires.

He would start every morning at six, because it was long to walk across Paris, and he must be at the bank at 8.30, and he wanted to have time to pray very much in the church for the future of their son André.

Leur fils André

The little André Marie Jean d'Audiene was born on the Sunday, 11th July of this year 1914. He was the child of a fine old race, that kept its fineness through loss of everything else.

Fernande was very ill. She would not have a doctor, because it would have cost so much, and the sage-femme did not take care of her especially well. But she did not die, and the boy was beautiful—their son André; and above the clouds she floated in golden spaces few people even know of.

Xavier's mother came, a gentle, exquisite old lady, always burdened by her fallen fortunes and past greatness, too confused to complain, quite helpless and very sweet.

She sat with Fernande in the room over the Square du Croisic, and was troubled vaguely because the little André did not have fine laces and gold and ivory toys as his father had had. She missed for him the huge, dark, old room of the Brittany château, where now strangers lived, and grieved for it gently.

But Fernande and Xavier had no grief for anything. She was glad to have suffered so much, it was like having passed through fire and coming out with every sense exquisitely, marvellously, refined and purified. She felt all the little fine lines and colours of happiness. There were a myriad happinesses, rare and clear. She was conscious of each

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one, separately and especially, some very small and some very great, and all of them beautiful. Happinesses came crowding to her, the more closely when she was the more ill. All the little subtle wonderful happinesses of her life came to her; she saw them, and felt that they were hers, and touched them.

To Xavier came the ecstasy of worship. He worshipped her with the baby in her arms, and knew that the Madonna was not jealous of his worship. He knew that Our Lady of Victory, holding in her arms the King of Kings, saw and understood and was glad.

There were two weeks that were happy, every day, from morning till night and from night till morning.

The day, the Sunday, that their son André was two weeks old, Xavier was troubled by a thing he noticed in the *Matin*, as he glanced through it, sitting by Fernande after his coffee and crescent roll. For days he had scarcely read the papers. Even that morning he did not at all take in what the thing meant. It could not be. He had a moment's dreadful sight of it, as he sat there by Fernande, and then he turned away from it. He did not speak of it to her.

Next day, Monday, it seemed more than ever that it could not be. He read the *Matin* in the

Leur fils André

métro on his way to the bank, and came home in the evening humming a thing that he did not realise was the "Marseillaise."

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday—one could not believe it, but one knew it. One felt it. It was coming. The air was thick and dark with it. It closed down, and pressed in, and gripped and tightened.

He went on with his work in the bank. He had done his three years' service in the artillery. If it were to be, he would be called out on the third day.

Friday—Friday, 31st July—Fernande said to him when he came home that night, "I've discovered such a nice thing. You see I've had the tall mirror moved over there opposite the bed, and from the bed I can see the window in it, and the corner of the Square by the gate. And if you will go over to that corner as you start out in the mornings, and stand there and wave to me, I can see you from here in the bed. You'll not see me, but I'll see you, and you must do that every morning, Xavier." It had worried her, since she was ill, that she could not go to the window, as she always had, and see him off. She said, "You must go there every morning—every morning."

And he thought, "How many mornings?"

So next morning, Saturday, as he went, he stopped on the corner by the gate and waved to

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Fernande, where she lay with their son André up in the shabby room.

Saturday, and it was come.

The little man in the bank had it written in his livret to go out on the third day. He could not tell the mother of their son André.

Sunday she heard the declaration of war cried in the Boulevard outside the gates of the Square.

Sunday—that day their boy was three weeks old.

Fernande was happy in the morning, and he made her think he was happy too, while he was wondering how to tell her. He had no need to tell her—she heard it cried in the street.

All afternoon the people in the Boulevard Montparnasse, tramping up and down, set their feet to the time of marching and sang the “Marseillaise.”

Fernande knew just what it meant, but she was very quiet.

Xavier sat all day by her and held her hand.

His mother cried very much but very quietly. She said that he would go away and die, and that Fernande would be ill and not able to nurse little André, and he would die, and then Fernande would die, and she, the old lady, would be left all alone.

Fernande knew that she must be quiet, or it would harm André.

Leur fils André

She knew just what war meant. Xavier did not know what war meant as she knew. Something relentless made her see it. She saw it in smoke and flame, marching of thousands upon thousands, alien feet on one's dear roads. She saw the roads, poplar bordered, in sunshine, black with enemy hosts, and the fields where the golden harvest was trodden, and there was taken a harvest of death. She heard cannon, and galloping horses, and cries. Something pitiless made her hear the cries of horses and of women and little children—babies like André. She saw dead men in the fields. They looked very strange. They seemed to be melted into the earth they had come from. She saw magpies in the roads that were rutted by passing of guns, and heard larks singing over fields stained with blood. And she saw her Xavier go away. She did not see anything for him beyond his going. In the battles she saw, she did not see him. She did not find him among the dead men in the fields—she only saw him going. She saw him go out of the door of the shabby room. And then she saw him in the mirror, where he could stand to wave to her, over in the corner by the gate. He could not see her from there, and she could not get up to go to the window and wave him off. Because of their son André she would have to let him go like that—go, to what?

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That night he cried terribly, alone in the poor little sitting-room where he had been sleeping on a sofa since Fernande was ill.

The next day, Monday, he must do so many things. He must arrange everything for her and for his mother. He must try to pretend to them that he did not think it would be for long. He must do everything with a half-jesting air, as though soon he'd be back and laughing at it. It was dreadful, that part of it, trying to arrange that the two women might have something on which to live.

Fernande was not troubled at all about what they were to do, his mother and she, but only about his having to get some sort of a kit together—two pairs of boots, food for twenty-four hours, a grey blanket.

Monday, 3rd August 1914, 2^e jour de la mobilisation. Fernande did not have to see the women's faces in the streets that day. Perhaps it was better for her to be spared that, or perhaps she might have got a sympathy from it, some sense of the being in sorrow together of the women of the world.

The night of Monday, the last night. They neither of them dared to word anything. Afterwards, what she remembered of it was that she had told him he was a messy, clumsy boy because he knocked over the vase of yellow roses he had

Leur fils André

brought her home when he came in on Tuesday night—and he had said she was an old fuss,—they had quite quarrelled. She was so glad afterwards that they had said really quite cross things to each other. Otherwise how could they have borne it?

Tuesday, 4th August. He had to be at the Gare de Lyon at ten o'clock. The métro was not running, or any trams or buses. He would have to walk. He must leave the Square du Croisic at least at seven.

The maid-of-all-work came in time to make his coffee. She was crying. The sage-femme, with her hair in bigoudis, came crying also to say good-bye to him. His mother cried quietly in her purple wrapper.

Fernande did not cry at all. She made him promise to sew his medal of Notre Dame des Victoires in the breast pocket of his uniform, and to eat enough, and not to take cold. And then she laughed and hugged him, and hugged him, and told him that now he'd have to stand up straight, he was no more a banker's clerk who might hunch his shoulders, but a soldier of France. She made him take the other croissant with him in his pocket, and when he kissed their son André she shut her eyes.

Her hands were cold as ice in his hands when he

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kissed her the last time, and she kept her eyes shut.

"I won't see you go out of the door," she said, speaking with difficulty, in a thick, heavy sort of way, "but when you are at the gate, go to the corner and turn and wave, and I will see you."

Top of a Letter

Deuxième jour de la mobilisation. I was writing a telegram in the bureau de poste, and a boy of perhaps twenty years old was writing, laboriously, a letter on the shelf beside me before the guichet.

It was the Monday, that terrible day when the last classes went.

I did not mean to see, but I did see what the boy had written at the top of the page.

He was a clumsy boy in the white blouse of a mason. He wrote with great effort, his head on one side, his tongue between his lips, his eyes screwed up. His hand was not at all clean.

He had begun his letter, "Mon amour, je pars, je t'écris——"

“Demain nous serons au feu”

“Demain nous serons au feu”

Neuvième jour de la mobilisation. Her boy had written, “Little Mother, don’t worry, we are so gay. In the train we were packed like sardines—how we laughed! We marched through wheatfields, and I thought of you because of the poppies and bluets. Quantities of partridges. In some woods we saw a splendid stag. We men are all the best of friends. We sing all the time. ‘Sambre et Meuse’ makes me think of thee. My little Mother,—be proud of thy son. When again thou seest him, he will be maréchal.” The scrap of paper was in an envelope. Across the flap of the envelope he had written—the order must have come after he’d closed his letter, and he was only nineteen, happy and proud—“Tomorrow we’ll be under fire.”

The Other Door

Quinzième jour de la mobilisation. In the deserted Palace a door, closed, behind which, one knew, passed something terrible.

A man, of hanging head, white face eaten all up by a black beard, black eyes, haunted, took his place on the bench of the accused.

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“Your name, age, profession, domicile?” asked of him the colonel.

The man answered—never mind his name—twenty-nine years, comptable, and the house, number, and the street:

The order of *mis en jugement* was read by the greffier. He told how this man, on the third of August, tried to sell to the enemy information. He thought he was dealing with a spy. But it was with a detective that he was dealing.

One can divine the rest.

It was quite right, inevitable, the decision of those who listened to the reading of the *pièces de forme*.

A woman with red eyes and ravaged face was hanging about the *Porte du Conseil*.

“Monsieur, c’est par là qu’il va sortir?”

Railway Station

UNDER the oil lamp, on the platform of the little railway station, a table was laid out with bandages and dressings, and a couple of nurses waited. Beside the table was a barrow with wine and bread and September fruit.

There was a full white moon that night; in the light of it one could see, from the station platform,

Railway Station

the shapes of the little, low, village houses, the square church tower, the width of the fields, the outlines of the hills far off. The odours of the fields, and the autumn night stillness, came with the moonlight into the little railway station where the Red Cross nurses waited for the train of wounded that would stop to take water there.

All day, from the station one could have heard the sound of cannon and could have seen the black cloud of smoke that hung under the red sun above the battle.

The train came in, its headlights gleaming in the dark. It was composed of loose trucks fitted with stretchers. It contained the first of the men who had fallen in the battle of the day.

The train stopped. Those of the men who could walk got out to help care for the more badly wounded.

The curé had come to help. He worked with zeal.

A soldier ran to him. One of the wounded was dying there and then.

The curé went to him.

It was very strange in the white moonlight. There was always the sound of cannon from under the hills. One had come to know the different voices of the cannon—the heavier tone of the German guns, the sharper note of the French.

Accidentals

There was only time for the curé to give his blessing.

The wounded man's arms had been crossed on his heart. They fell to his sides, and he was no more breathing.

They carried his body to the van at the end of the train.

The Sunshine of the Beginning

IN those first days of the great war, Paris knew a very special sort of sunlight. In August it was like the sunlight of spring, the real beginning of years and days, and it was so beautiful that it seemed as if, each time, it was a thing that never had been before. The sunshine had clear wide spaces opened, left empty for it, because all the false things that had clogged the way were gone. None of those things counted any more. The leaves were fallen in the Cour la Reine and the Champs Elysées, and in all the gardens where children played as they had used to play,—when could it have been? only just days ago? Had the children's playing soldiers in the gardens meant nothing, only just days ago? Surely the mothers knitting in the gardens had never, never, chattered of idle things?

